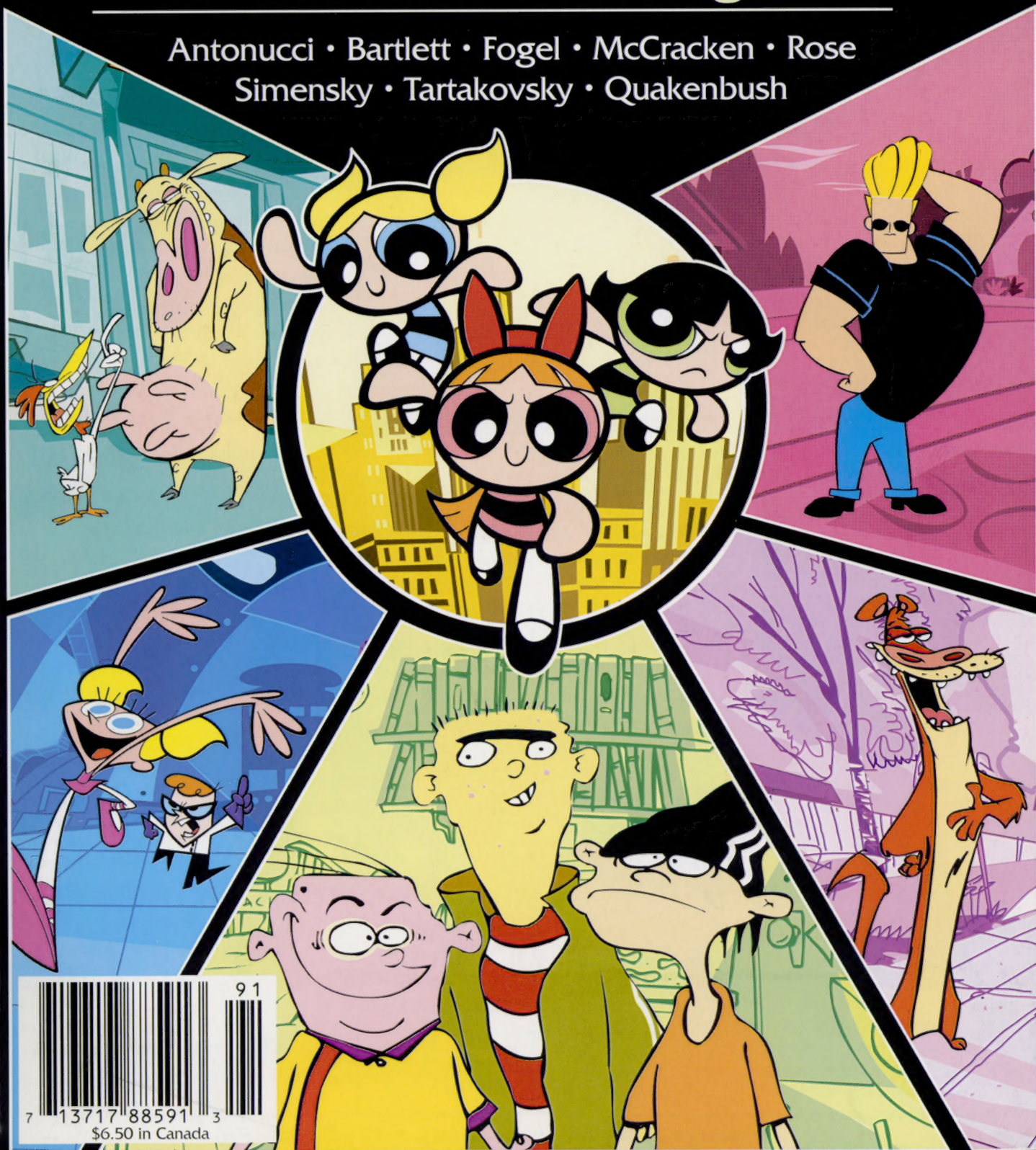


# ANIMATO!

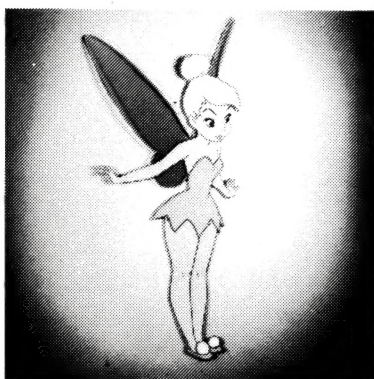
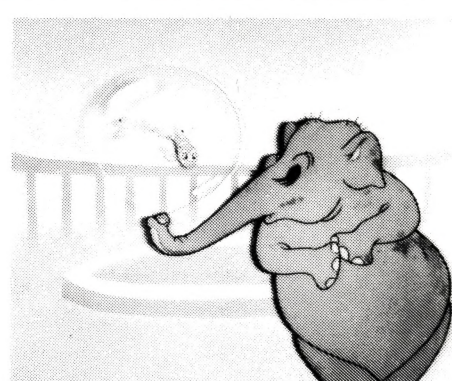
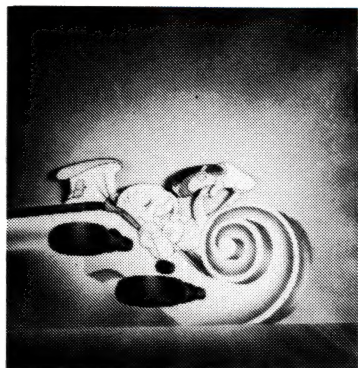
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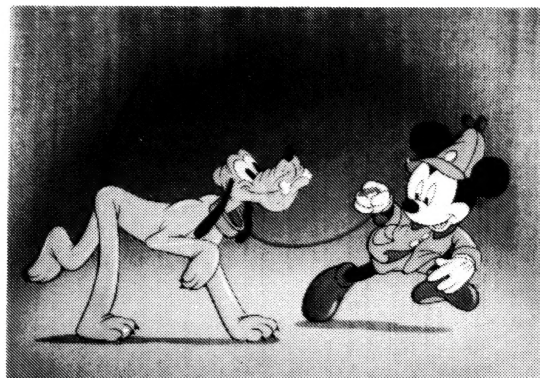


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# ANIMATO!

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# Editorial



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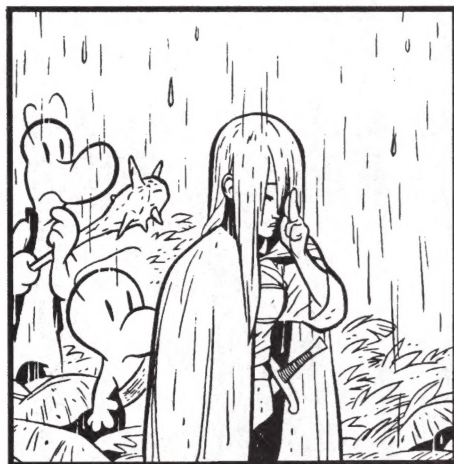
Hollywood suits that used to ignore or, at least, tolerate animation are now recognizing the potential and jumping on the animation bandwagon. However, most don't trust the book or source material and start aiming for the lowest common denominator. Hopefully, there will be exceptions.

Wading through the pile of Hollywood hoopla, I'd like to share a list of animated features I'm looking forward to with unbridled enthusiasm and child-like anticipation.

## *Bone*

If you haven't discovered Jeff Smith's *Bone*, rush down to your local comic book emporium and pick up a few issues.

I've been anticipating a *Bone* feature since Disney had first dibs a few years back. When Disney couldn't make the story work without laying the groundwork for a Broadway musical, Jeff Smith went elsewhere. I expect Nickelodeon will "trust the book," listen to Jeff Smith and do a terrific job.



© 1999 Jeff Smith

A panel from Jeff Smith's *Bone* featuring Smiley Bone, Fone Bone and Thorn.

## *Tarzan*

Just as the animated *Batman* is the definitive Dark Knight, Disney's *Tarzan* has the potential to become the celebrated version of Edgar Rice Burroughs' classic tale.

Animation is the perfect platform for the *Tarzan* legend. Spanning decades back to the silent film days of Elmo Lincoln, there have been over forty versions of *Tarzan*. In none of the live action versions did the actor's body movement convincingly suggest being raised by simians.

I'm very excited about the focus of Glen Keane and *Tarzan*'s animators. The character can be finally be imbued with the natural movement and instincts of an animal.

## WARNER BROS. THE IRON GIANT TM

## *The Iron Giant*

Judging from the artwork, peeks and inside information, *Iron Giant* might be the best animated film from Warners since *Cats Don't Dance*. Unfortunately, Warner Bros. has the undisputed title of "Company Most Likely to Turn Gold into Lead." Animation fans must hold their collective breath because the future of WB feature animation dangles by a thread. If *The Iron Giant* doesn't reach expectations, the animation division could be in jeopardy from the same corporate suits that hampered production in the first place.

## *Princess Mononoke*

I'm really looking forward to the release of *Princess Mononoke* simply because more Americans will be exposed to the masterful work of Hayao Miyazaki.

## *Chicken Run*

All I need to know is it's stop-motion chickens by Aardman in a feature-length film distributed by DreamWorks. An added bonus is the voice talent of brilliant actress Julia Sawahla. Can't wait. Can't miss. Life is good.

If you are wondering why I'm so skeptical when it comes to Hollywood suits consider this: Huckster Jon Peters is in charge of bringing Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* to the screen. Even though animating *Sandman* would be the best way to present Gaiman's other-world characters, the studio is going for live action. Not good, but not a sin. The sin is Hollywood's need to rewrite a storyline by one of the great writers of our time. The sin is doing the movie without Neil Gaiman.

They will tell you the comic book readers won't generate enough big movie numbers to justify sticking to the storyline. So why desecrate Gaiman's creation? Why not just slap some cool special effects elements together and call it something else. "Sand-Jam" comes to mind. Aaarrgh!

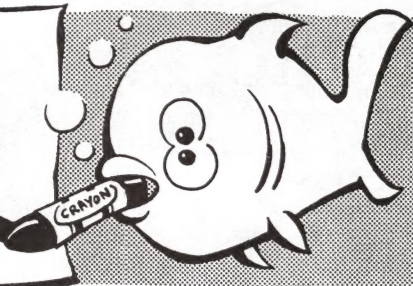
Editor's Note: For the **Publishertorial** column, with all the inside scoop on future articles and excuses...er...um...explanations for being so damned late, please turn to page 115.

Two talented men, who are represented in this issue, passed away before we went to press. This issue is dedicated to the memory and spirit of Tom McKimson and Tom Roberts.





# FAN MAIL FROM SOME FLOUNDER



Dear ANiMATO!

I am an Italian animation fan and I really enjoy reading your fabulous magazine though my English is not good.

I particularly appreciated the article dedicated to Fleischer's classic *Mr Bug Goes To Town* which appeared in issue #37.

It would be interesting to read similar articles on two "almost forgotten" non-American animated features such as *Sneznaja Koroleva (The Snow Queen)* and France's *Le Roi et l'Oiseau (The King and Mr. Bird)*. Will you ever dedicate some pages of your magazine to those beautifully animated cartoons?

Cordially yours,

**Stefano Monticelli**  
V. Del Malfante 5  
59100 Prato Italy

*Stefano,*

*We will certainly consider your suggestions on non-American animated features. Almost all of our articles come from fans who are passionate about the subject they are writing about. Only on rare occasions do we assign a subject to a writer.*

*If you are inclined to write, we accept articles written in Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese.*

--Patrick

Dear Patrick,

I love your magazine for what it is not, as much as for what it is...Good work!!!!

I wanted to point out something that appeared in Issue #38, page 84. On this page, is a pic of 7 people, but only 5 were identified. I'm not sure about the unidentified guy on the right, between Nik Ranieri, and Tony Bancroft, but the gentleman standing between Joe Haidar and Mike Surrey, is none other than Rich Draper, one of the finest clean-up artists, assistant animators that I have had the pleasure of working with in my career. The others identified are all animators, and as often is the case, assistant animators seldom get due recognition. Rich may be animating by now, but the point is, it would have been very easy to identify both nameless people...a simple phone call, to Disney...to Mike Surrey, by author Amid Amidi would have solved the mystery!

Otherwise, a good issue!

**Willy Ashworth**  
Senior Animator  
The Animation House  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

*Amid filed his article as we were going to press, so I chose to run the photo without verifying two names. Rich Draper was one, the other is Jim Capabianco, now with PIXAR. (See below)*

--Patrick

See ya,

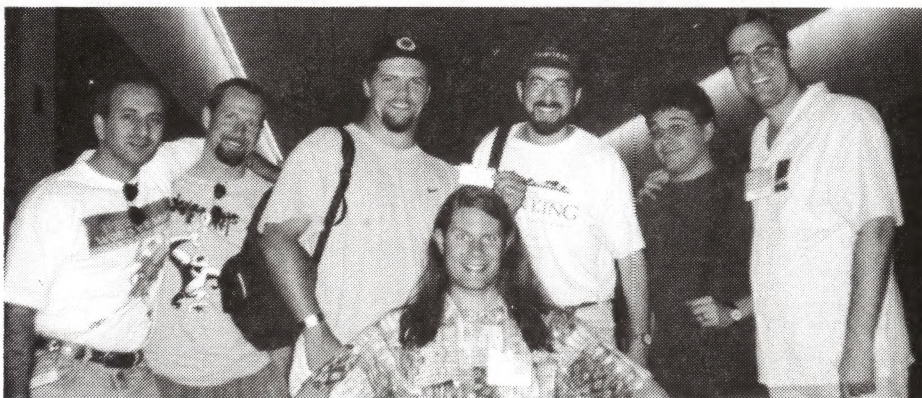
**Steve Worth**  
Producer

The Goddamn George Liquor Program

*I can't speak for Thelma, but I think she likes to provoke John Kricfalusi and his friends. When I asked her about her "psychic reviewing ability" she mumbled something rude.*

*I've been to the excellent Spumco website and my favorite section is Eric Costello's Warner Bros. Cartoon Companion.*

--Patrick



Joe Haidar, Rich Draper, Mike Surrey, Nik Ranieri, Jim Capabianco, Tony Bancroft, Brian Ferguson



Dear Mr. Duquette,

I have just completed reading the article in your Spring 1998 issue, Davis Season - McKimmon Season, by John Hayes, and wish to give my comments.

As you may or may not be aware, my father, Robert McKimmon, started in the animation business in 1928, as an animator, and went on to direct 175 cartoons with Warner Bros. Obviously, someone at Warner Bros. thought he was a talented director. He also created, amongst other characters, The Tasmanian Devil, Foghorn Leghorn, and Sylvester Jr. He continued directing animation until he passed away in 1977. An animation career that lasted 50 years. I do not recall an article in your magazine about Robert McKimmon?

After reading the article by Mr. Hayes, he makes a redundant statement at the end "This author, if you haven't guessed, holds Arthur Davis's talent in higher regard than Robert McKimmon's." This after he spends six pages essentially putting down most of my father's efforts, as a director, in comparison with Mr. Davis. Needless to say, the whole article deeply disturbed me, not only as a son, but someone who is in the animation art business and has been around animation all of my life. I also had my uncle, Charles McKimmon, review the article for his opinion. Keep in mind that my uncle started his animation career in 1937 and animated for my father from 1946 until 1954. Thus, I consider him more of an expert than Mr. Hayes who watches cartoons and makes signs in Kansas. My uncle's overall summation of the article was that Mr. Davis, although a competent director, "was not even in the same league with my father." He considered the whole article to have little basis and written by someone who was never connected with the direction or animation of a cartoon or the period of time referenced in the article.

Your reader's should keep in mind that this article represents only Mr. Hayes's opinion and not necessarily those who are, or have been connected, with the animation business. I would suggest that Mr. Hayes continue to illustrate books and make signs rather than expose his biased and untrained opinion on the public.

Yours truly,

**Robert P. McKimmon Jr.**  
Anaheim, California

Dear Sir,

I've bought your magazine off and on (when the subjects interest me) for a while now, and I must say that I truly enjoyed this issue. There were quite a few subjects brought up that I would like to pose questions on.

1. Regarding the Fan Mail From Some Flounder section's letter Tokyo Woes, and also the Animation Preservation letter that probably should be sent to all the Congressmen, is there any hope that some of the older and/or offensive cartoons will ever be released? I mean, I don't condone racism but I'd like a complete collection of WB cartoons and *Coal Black* is one of them. I think I can make my own judgement about the content. And if it were a \$300 laser disc boxed set then it would only go in the hands of real collectors, and not end up as a \$10 videotape that might offend some mother in Nowhere, America, who accidentally got it for her kids even though the 5 bright warning stickers were still on the package. I'd love to see the old B&W Popeye cartoons, the classic Pink Panther cartoons, a full set of Disney cartoons and the rest of the MGM ones. Is there a way to write to Jerry Beck?

2. Thank you for that great article on Arthur Davis. He's been one of my all-time favorite directors ever since I first saw *Porky Chops*, *A Lumber Jackson*! I wish he had been asked to help run the short-lived WB attempt to put out new cartoons along with Chuck Jones because he knew how to come up with a really funny character to push all of the main character's buttons. *Doggone Cats* is also a perfect example of pushing and pushing.

3. You have some of the best reviews of anime videos (including rare ones like *Memoires*) and I was wondering if you might do a full article on one of the classic series, *Gundam*, since it'll be the 20th anniversary of that show next year. There have been a half dozen TV series around it and multiple OAVs and movies done for it. It would help to get more exposure to this genre and *Gundam* is one of the best subjects for that kind of article, along with *Space Battleship Yamato* which is gearing up for its anniversary.

Thank you for a great magazine.

**Alfred Urrutia**  
Disney Feature Animation  
via Internet

Dear Sirs,

At the end of Eric Costello's column in Issue #39, he asks for suggestions for future topics. Since I do not have a computer and cannot send him an email, I would be obliged if you would pass this letter on to him.

As a long-time animation enthusiast, particularly of the old Warner Bros. cartoons, I have often wondered how many of these productions contained caricatures of the animation staff. The Warner Bros. cartoons were awash with in-jokes containing animators names...billboards that advertised the Hotel Friz, dump trucks bearing the name Selzer Construction Company, the Tregoweth Brown building block in *One Froggy Evening* and numerous store fronts bearing the names C. M. Jones Dry Goods and Maltese Market.

The only bona fide caricature that I know of is the one of Friz Freleng who appears as the astronomer in the final moments of the 1952 Bugs Bunny cartoon, *Hasty Hare*. Several books claim that the gremlins in the 1944 cartoon, *Russian Rhapsody* are caricatures of the animators and I'm sure there must be other likenesses that were included in other cartoons for the amusement of the animators themselves.

This would probably be a difficult one to research, but I think that it could make for a very interesting column in ANiMATO!. I hope that you will give it some thought and let me take this opportunity to tell you how much I enjoy your insights into the Golden Age of Animation.

Yours sincerely,

**Michael Oldfield**  
Vancouver, British Columbia,  
Canada

Dear Sirs:

I'd like to compliment you on the two articles in ANiMATO! #39 on Warner directors Art Davis (by Dewey McGuire) and Bob McKimmon (by John Hayes). These two guys did an excellent job in analyzing the works of these two directors. I had little information on Davis's work at Warners until I read McGuire's article and learned a bit more about McKimmon with Hayes's story. Keep up the good work!!!

**Steve Baetzner**  
via Internet

*Editor's Note: After reading McKimmon's letter, I thought how I might feel if my father's career were to be discussed at length in a magazine article.*

*I contacted Robert P. McKimmon, Jr. and mentioned our policy of providing a platform for diverse opinion and invited Robert to write about his father and uncles. He accepted and promptly filed the article which appears on page 52.*

-Patrick

**MORE**

**FAN MAIL FROM  
SOME FLOUNDER**

**ON PAGE 122 ...**



# NAME THAT TOON

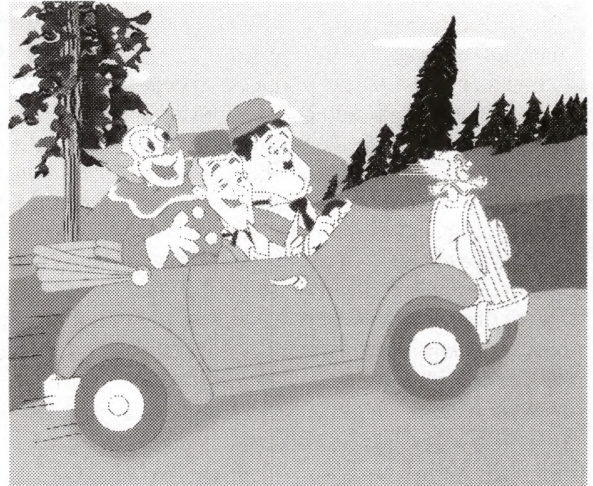
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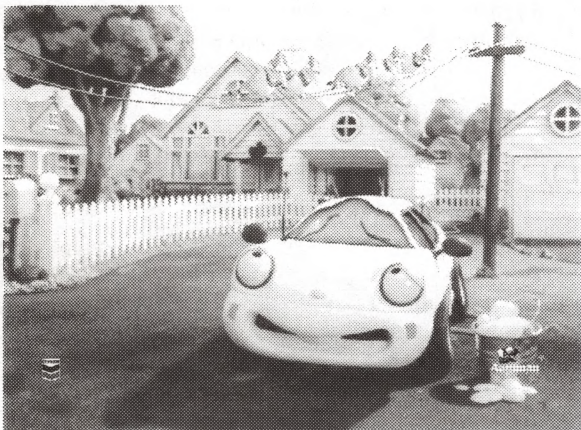
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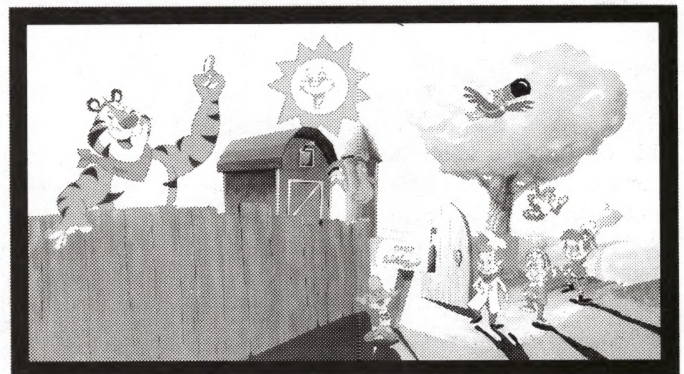


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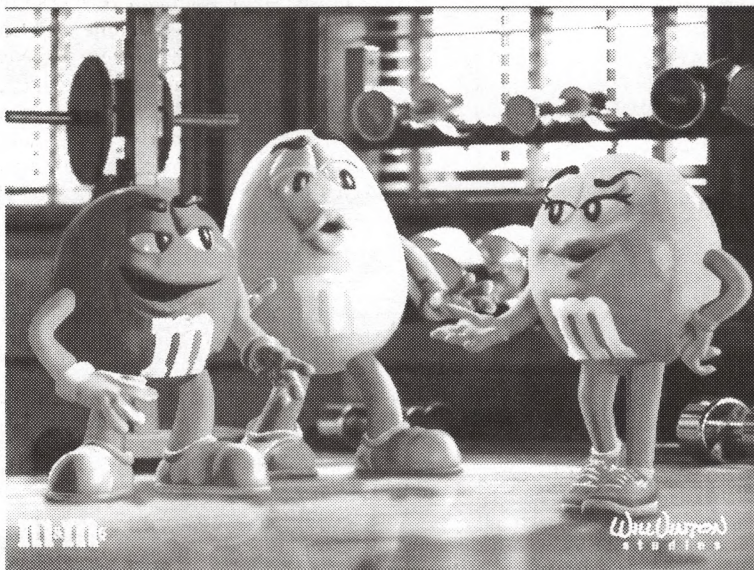
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DEALER INQUIRIES INVITED





by Hames Ware

When, in one of our phone conversations, I asked Bob Clampett who had done the wonderful *Froggy* voice in such WB shorts as 1939's *It's an Ill Wind* and the stepmother in *Coal Black*, he recalled the name Weber or Webb. He wasn't sure which, but said he'd check his records and get back to me - and in this letter he did! As readers of ANiMATO! know, Clampett's confusion was understandable, as Dave Weber and Danny Webb turned out to be the same person.

A master mimic as outlined by modern day master mimic Keith Scott in his ANiMATO! article on Danny, Webb's work can best be studied in Clampett's own 1938 WB cartoon *Porky in Egypt* where he does several voices, but as the camel, can be heard in a voice fairly close to his own natural voice.

We know this to be true because of an amazing piece of detective work Keith Scott did, using the faded copy of the WOR letter, wherein the writer alludes to a recently completed interview on *Jack Bundy's Radio Album* radio show, where Danny suggested Clampett would make a great

interview. Whether Bob actually ever did do the Jack Bundy show or not is unknown, but by using the date on the letter (June 20, 1945) Keith managed to track down the Webb interview! What one hears on the interview is a modest but very gifted mimic, who gives only a hint of what his voice was capable of, and spends the rest of the interview speaking about his WWII experiences after recent discharge. Like so many who experience war firsthand, you can detect a world weariness in Danny's voice, and one can only speculate what Webb must have been like before his career was interrupted.

You can get an inkling of just how good a mimic he was by hearing his dead-on Joe Penner voice for Egghead in several late '30s WB shorts. If you want to hear just how good his Froggy voice was, Lantz's 1941 *What's Cookin'?* (aka *Pantry Panic*) has Danny doing the raspy cat voice. As to which of the several Woody voices Danny might have rendered, that remains unknown. (My own personal favorite Woody is done à la Leo Gorcey in 1943's *Dizzy Acrobat*. But that may be too late chronologically to be Danny, and maybe also too late for the equally gifted Kent Rogers, who lost his life in WWII. The best guess remains Dick Nelson, another gifted voice actor who lasted on into the 1960s and for whom we'd sure like to have current information!)

## WOR

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June 20, 1945

Dear Mr. Klampert

After hearing your interesting chat on Miss Beatty's program this morning, I wondered if you would care to go on JACK BUNDY's ALBUM which is a six a week from 1 to 1:15 p.m. over WOR?

My reason for asking this, aside from the one of a good job, is that Danny Webb just stopped in and suggested you go on the ALBUM; said he had been on and that you, the father of Bugs Bunny, certainly ought to do the same.

If you are free any day between 12:30-1:15 and would be willing to be interviewed, I'll be very happy to make the appointment for you. Jack likes his guests to come about 12:30 (24th floor, same as when you were with Miss Beatty); chat informally; then go on the show 1 pm.

Yours sincerely,

*Helen King*  
Helen King

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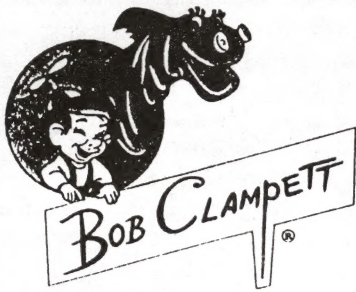


Danny Webb

At any rate though, Danny had preceded Mel Blanc at Warner Bros. by about a year, unlike Mel, Danny lost his major WB voice when Joe Penner died, and soon WWII would pull him away from West Coast cartoons, apparently forever.

After the war for whatever the reasons, the war letter makes clear that Danny had





Productions, Inc.

729 Seward - Hollywood, California 90038 - Hollywood 6-0264

February 25, 1972

Mr. Hames Ware  
818 W. 20th  
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601

Dear Hames:

So glad to hear from you, and am very happy that I was able to be of help.

Before you go to press I'm sure I'll be able to help you fill in some of the other holes.

I told you about the voice artists from New York Danny Webb or Webber that did some voices for us at Warners and as I recall did some things for Lantz during the same period. Possibly even Woody. I'm enclosing a letter from a person who was acquainted with Danny in New York at that time. Of course, this is some time ago, but there is always a chance that you might locate him or somebody that knows him through the info in this letter.

Please give my best regards to your associate on this project Graham Webb, and tell him that I intend to write him also as soon as I have a little more free time.

Best regards,

  
Bob Clampett

BC:gok

decided to return to his East Coast origins. However - there is a tantalizing possibility that Danny's cartoon voice career may be continued briefly on the East Coast. At about this same time, Popeye's longtime voice Jack Mercer was called away by the service and, for several cartoons in the 1946 period, Popeye's voice is clearly done by others. Having already done a line in a

Popeye voice at Warner Bros. in 1937's *Porky's Garden*, Danny would have been a natural to have rendered the best of the non-Mercer Popeyes.

But even if that proves to be the case, the voices of Danny Webb are not to be heard after 1946...or are they?

In still another tantalizing possibility, a recently released boxed set of Doo-Wop

Collection, the liner notes made reference to a 1950s manager - promoter - songwriter named Danny Webb.

Considering all the wonderful voices one can hear in the Doo-Wop groups of the 1950s, could it be that one of those voices might just be that of the multi-talented Danny Webb?

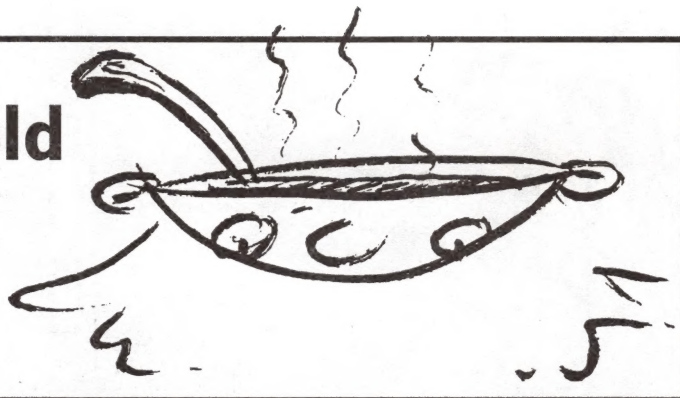




# My Dinner With Arnold

*Dinner and Doodles with Craig Bartlett  
and an Inverted Soup Tureen*

by Samantha Berger



Some call him "Football Head," to others he's more of a "Taco Boy," and yet others will insist he's clearly an "inverted soup tureen." Who else could it be but Arnold, star of his own show, *Hey Arnold*, Mondays and Wednesdays at 8 pm (Eastern) on Nickelodeon, and weekend mornings too. Usually, while many of my co-workers are huddling by their televisions watching *Melrose Place* and *90210*, there's a good chance I can be found checking out a little almond-head-shaped kid by the name of Arnold. Needless to say, I dig the show. Duh.

Which is why I initially attempted to interview Craig Bartlett, creator of *Hey Arnold*, out in Pasadena at the World Animation Celebration. I had pages of questions ready to go, and we even went so far as to start the interview, but Craig was a judge at WAC and the screenings went on nonstop, with tiny breaks in between, so due to pressing engagements, and interruptions beyond our control, we never got to finish.

But lucky for me, a mere month later, Craig was in town and conditions were right. He may have only been here on a 48 hour swoop through New York City. He may have had one of those two nights, committed to an "idea exchange" at *Blues Clues*. (This "Exchange," by the way, was great and consisted of a talk, Q & A, and terrific screenings of Bartlett's work past, present and future). Whatever. Frantically busy as he may have been, he found the time not only to talk and answer all my rambling questions, but to draw, dine, and drink as well. And so, with a jillion and one thank yous to David Levy for remembering the *Hey Arnold* fan that I am, inviting me to *Blues Clues*, and thus making all this possible, I bring you "my dinner with Arnold."

First, a brief history: Craig Bartlett is originally from Seattle, and came to Portland to attend the Museum Art School, and ended up finishing at Evergreen. He worked at Will Vinton for a good six years, before

hitting a major crossroads. It was the episode of *Pee Wee's Playhouse* where an actual dog eats an actual can of actual dog food in actual real time. In the same episode, Pee Wee models special glasses which enable him to see black and white footage of a bizarre eyewear fashion show from the early 1960s, as a killer samba soundtrack plays in the background. Bartlett thought it

was the best thing ever. His boss at Vinton hated it. In Craig's own words: "Well, he hates it. I love it. That's it. Time to go."

That's just what he did. He moved to LA and began making the *Penny* cartoons which ran regularly on *Pee Wee's Playhouse*. Penny was created originally by Aardman (of Wallace and Gromit fame) and is voiced by many different little girls.



Craig Bartlett





*Craig Bartlett sketched and doodled on tavern placemats while chatting with Samantha Berger.*

She's kind of a low-relief style of molds, or, what Bartlett calls "Two-point-five dimensional," and has pennies for eyes. Craig explained he's never had as much freedom as he did during the *Penny* project. He was given extensive audio tape of different little girls talking. They would tell stories, go off on wild tangents, stammer, and blurt. Funny spontaneous stuff. Then Craig would take the audio and extract segments he thought might work well to animate. Sometimes blips from completely different parts of the audio are pieced together.

After selecting the audio, Craig then had the freedom to animate whatever he wanted to go along with the sound. Sometimes it was a literal interpretation of what the little girls said. But often the little girls would pause, or have an unpredictable unplanned moment of genius. It was the animators' decision of what to do in that time. They made the choice, and then took the storyboard to Pee Wee (Paul Reubens, I suppose I should say, but...) who would usually just say "yes," or "no." Bartlett's creative freedom with *Penny* is reflective of Pee Wee's creative freedom with the Playhouse. Even though the show was on CBS, somehow Pee Wee had maintained an unbelievable amount of creative control. Possibly because of the huge success of the hit feature film, *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*, just earlier.

Thus, after the go-ahead, the *Penny* cartoons were done in one take. That's another thing about doing *Penny*, and stop motion in general, that Craig likes. "Stop motion is like performance in a way that cel's not. With drawings, you can flip through them, go back, and make changes. With stop motion, it's like one-take. It's metamorphic. Improvisational." He goes on to explain how while watching an old reel of stop motion, you can remember what you were doing at that point in time - what music you were listening to when you shot a certain scene, what you ate that day.

Maybe that's why the very first film starring Arnold was created in the same style as *Penny* - "2.5 D." Craig likes to think of this as a younger version of Arnold, maybe a five-year-old version. In *Arnold Escapes From Church*, Arnold's first appearance, he's wearing a suit, and is a littler guy, but the football shaped head, and the all important hat are there. It's clearly Arnold. Craig made three of these independent Arnold films in his living room (after *Escapes From Church* came *The Arnold Waltz* and *Arnold Rides a Chair*. They are Associate Produced by Lisa Groening. Hmmmm... Groening... Groening... where have I heard that name before? And Lisa Groening too...hmmmmmm.....)

When the work for Pee Wee's Play-

house had ended, Bartlett became determined to keep making films by himself. One a year was the goal. To this day he encourages everyone else interested in animation to do it. The reason is to keep building your reel of work, and to show you can do all phases of animation direction, character, design, writing, storyboard, animation, production, music, titles and everything in between.

Gradually, Bartlett's "day job" began to consume more of the time previously devoted to independent Arnold films. These day jobs consisted of work at Bob Rodgers doing four films for the World's Fair. He worked at Klasky Csupo on the first season of *Rugrats*. The drawback, of course, was the sacrifice of making independent films. The plus side (other than earning money), was it enabled Bartlett to meet incredible artists, writers, designers, and musicians, who he would later recruit to work on *Hey Arnold*. Steve Viksten, Rachel Lipman, and Jim Lang are a few of these people, and have all made major contributions to *Hey Arnold*.

In the beginning, there were two drawings. The first was of four characters: Arnold, Gerald, Helga and Harold.

The other was of the boarding house Arnold lives in. Grandma was in it, Arnold was out front, and the overpass went over the buildings. These pictures hung on



Craig's wall, and became the birth of the entire project. A later drawing showed about ten "background kids." Since that drawing all of these very same "background kids" have developed into full-blown characters, with names, lives and stories.

In 1994 the pilot was made, and it premiered in January of 1995. Then the network put it on hold for a while and it started running regularly in 1996. Because of the delay, by the time it was on, there was a surplus of episodes ready to go. This head start was a great beginning, never making people feel rushed or pressured. They do 40 stories a year, and each half hour of *Hey Arnold* contains two stories. The end result has stayed true to Craig's original characters, stories and ideas.

The reason for this is probably because Bartlett has always had a hands-on role in the making of *Hey Arnold*. He is the creator, executive producer, cowriter, co-character designer, and is involved in almost every aspect of the show, from the storyboards to the voice casting. For example, he wanted to have real kids play the voices. Indeed they do, and are incredible. Francesca Marie Smith, who has played Helga from the beginning is brilliant and my hero. Jamil Smith, who has played Gerald since day one is also just great.

And Craig believes Toran Caudell, one young man who voices Arnold, understands the character so well, he has truly helped to define him.

But what happens when one of the kids has a voice change? Sorry? Get out? Don't let the door hit cha? No chance. Craig knows how important *Hey Arnold* is to these kids, and how important the kids are to *Hey Arnold*. A voice change could very well be a sensitive situation, professionally and personally, and for many of the children, it might be their first experience working. Not to mention, *They* like the kids,

just as much as the kids like the show. So Craig and his team will create a new, different character for that person to play - one that suits their new voice. That way they can stay on the show, and the *Hey Arnold* family continues to grow. It's by far the most decent thing I've ever heard about in Hollywood.

There are some other great choices Bartlett made about *Hey Arnold*, that consequently set it apart from other network cartoons. The urban setting of the show

to give away even one thing about it, but highly recommend it come next December. Another moving episode is the one about the Pigeon Man. It's rare to see a cartoon featuring a man who hangs out on a city rooftop and communicates, cares for, and loves the pigeons. But that's what's great about *Hey Arnold*. It's quirky, unpredictable and unique.

Some of Craig's favorites are Helga episodes, and times when her character changes, moves and develops. At this point,

Helga is a deep, complex, intriguing character, who has evolved into a (pardon the pun) "reel person." She is a culmination of the writing, drawing, and voice-acting that is pure magic. Her unrequited love for Arnold drives the show, but her character and its complexities do just as strongly. Her character has come a long way; from being an unexplained bullyish grouchy tom-boy-in-pink, who especially is mean to Arnold, to a generous, good



More pub placemat art by Craig Bartlett

effects everything in it. Whole episodes have taken place riding the subway, or transforming a vacant lot filled with garbage into a baseball field. The fact Arnold doesn't have a traditional family with a mother and father is another unconventional choice that works very well. Arnold lives with his grandparents and has a kind of extended family of all the people who live in the boarding house. Many of these are zany ethnic characters with incredible accents, and very true to the urban life I grew up knowing. But one of the strongest things that sets *Hey Arnold* apart is its ability not only to make you laugh, but also to move you, sometimes to think, sometimes to cry, often to empathize.

And man, there are some episodes that pack a wallop. I had to explain to a friend who called me after the *Hey Arnold Christmas Special* why my voice was cracking and I sounded all choked up. I don't want

souled, tortured artist, who is often more insightful, witty and truthful than her peers.

So what lies ahead? A full length feature film of *Hey Arnold*, and a bunch more episodes. A character with Tourette's syndrome called the Monkey Man, which Bartlett thinks may not fly with the powers that be at the network. (Hmmm...I wonder why?) He'd also like to "bring back urban legends of the show more strongly and have Arnold and Gerald investigate. Also to reassert the key relationship between Arnold and Gerald, and bring Gerald back more strongly."

What else? Probably tons of merchandise (I'm surprised this hasn't happened yet, actually.) Personally, instead of cheesy free-with-kid's-meal-action-figures (or "landfill") I'd like to see a retro-metal lunch box with Gerald on it, Harold Pez, some Helga pink flannel pajamas, and a

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# ERIC'S COLUMN



by Eric Costello

## Faces From The News

With the tight links among the Hollywood movie studios, radio (and later television) networks, and the various studios that produced theatrical cartoons in the '20s, '30s and '40s, it is not surprising that a wealth of caricatures of movie, radio and television stars were used in these cartoons. *Mother Goose Goes Hollywood* (Disney, Jackson, 1938) and *Hollywood Steps Out* (WB, Avery, 1941) are top-flight examples of this usage taken to great lengths.

Of course, when one considers that cartoons were, once upon a time, shown as a package with newsreels, as well as features, it is not surprising that a number of "real world," historical figures will make an appearance in cartoons. As usual, World War II provided the most interesting and extensive use of these headline personalities, but it is by no means limited to that period in time, and numerous examples can be seen at various times throughout the period of the production of Hollywood short subjects.

### Hail to the Chief

Eddie Selzer, the feckless producer of Warner Bros. cartoons in the '40s and '50s, is said by Chuck Jones to have once issued an edict that he wanted "no gags about Ike [then-President Dwight Eisenhower]." Jones sardonically noted "I'm sure this was a relief to Eisenhower, who no doubt lived in fear of our acerbic wit. Of course, Eddie hadn't noticed that we almost never included contemporary or temporal humor in our films" (*Chuck Amuck*, pp. 92-3). Well, of course, as this and other columns have (and will) show, Jones's comment is somewhat off the mark with respect to Warner Bros. cartoons, and indeed, with Hollywood cartoons in general. Considering that the major market for these cartoons was the United States, it is not surprising that American political figures popped up, even with some of the scruples that cartoon chieftains may have had.

One of the most notable appearances by a president is the Walter Lantz cartoon *Confidence*, released in July 1933, in the depths of the Great Depression. It's largely a reflection of the mood Franklin D. Roosevelt tried to instill in a country badly shaken by bank failures, stock market crashes, and the like. Oswald the Lucky Rabbit is advised by "Dr. Pill" that if a cure was sought, "There's your doctor!" and points to an FDR portrait. Oswald meets FDR, who sings (!) *Confidence*, giving Oswald the inspiration needed to combat the skeletal Depression.



Franklin Delano Roosevelt

FDR also shows up in a handful of Warner Bros. cartoons. In *Porky's Hero Agency* (Clampett, 1937) in which the Grecian honcho gives a fireside chat to the petrified (literally) citizens of his realm, even using FDR's famous "My friends..." opening line. *Aviation Vacation* (Avery, 1941) uses a Mount Rushmore gag that has, as its kicker, a choice of carved likenesses of FDR and Wendell Willkie, the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates in the 1940 election; it is odd that this gag is used in a cartoon released

nine months after the election, and is an illustration of the risks of topical humor.

(Two side notes. Willkie, who served as a de facto roving ambassador abroad for the United States before his death in 1944, is also referred to by the obnoxious Gremmlin in *Falling Hare* (Clampett, 1943) is rather forcefully making himself known to Bugs Bunny. An earlier version of the "For Democrats/For Republicans" gag used in *Aviation Vacation* is found in Avery's *Holiday Highlights* (1940), when two different days for Thanksgiving are shown on a calendar, one for each political persuasion. The gag is almost completely incomprehensible from a 1998 perspective, and its meaning only becomes apparent based on an examination of what happened while the cartoon was in production. On October 31, 1939, President Roosevelt proclaimed Thanksgiving Day November 23rd, a week ahead of the customary date, supposedly to stimulate the economy by extending the Christmas shopping period. [1940 World Almanac.] Observance was divided, and some die-hard Republicans refused to accept the date. Maine's then-governor, Lewis Barrows, was supposed to carve a turkey at the Maine banquet of the annual New England conference held in Boston on the date proclaimed by FDR, the 23rd; he refused to carve the turkey, drew a can of sardines from his pocket, and ate them for dinner. This gives one some idea of the kind of divisions that led to the gag.)

Other presidents make various cameo appearance as well. Herbert Hoover, long out of office, but a stock figure of pathetic fun, loses his famed round collar and deflates in one gag in *Art Gallery* (MGM, Harman, 1939), and a Hoover button is briefly seen in *A Jolly Good Furlough* (Paramount, Gordon, 1943) when Popeye's nephews are showing him various civil defense badges. An insect version of Harry Truman, in a brilliantly evocative caricature, is seen requesting an ant Congress to declare war on Elmer Fudd in *Ant Pasted* (WB, Freleng, 1953, released a few months after Truman left office), and *Droopy's*





*Good Deed* (MGM, Avery, 1951), even though it does not show Truman himself, cleverly tricks us by hinting at Truman, with a rendition of the *Missouri Waltz* on a piano, an instrument Truman was famous for playing. One curiosity is *Haredevil Hare* (WB, Jones, 1948). The opening newspaper headlines use, in part, clippings from real newspapers, as can be noted from the references to the then-pending Greek civil war. One of the photographs used, however, has a figure that bears a very strong resemblance to Richard Nixon, who at that time was a freshman congressman representing a Southern California congressional district. As such, it is quite likely that photographs of him would have appeared in a Los Angeles or Southern Californian newspaper that would most likely have been used for the paste-up. Alas, I have no way of confirming this identification for sure.

#### Go Ahead and Hiss — See Who Cares!

As noted above, however, the ripest targets for caricature came during World War II, when denigration of the enemy was a vital component of Allied propaganda. Too vital, in many respects, since in large measure the vigorous attacks on Nazis and the Japanese have meant that these cartoons are rarely, if ever, shown on television in recent years, out of fears that some audience segments would be offended (as was demonstrated by the fiasco of the release of *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* (WB, Freleng, 1944) on video some years back). Nevertheless, a certain amount of insight, and historical interest, can be gained from an examination of these usages.

First and foremost, of course, is Adolf Hitler, whose flamboyant personality and

instantly recognizable facial features and physical tics made him a favorite target of cartoonists throughout his career, particularly masters of the editorial cartoon like Sir David Low and the “Kuryinsky” team. One can even find animated cartoon references to him as far back as 1933, when he chases Jimmy Durante with an ax in *Bosko’s Picture Show* (WB, Harman) and when a wafer-thin caricature of him giving the stiff-armed salute can be seen from a patron’s odd angle in *She Was an Acrobat’s Daughter* (WB, Freleng, 1937). But it was only after the entrance of the US into World War II that we see the wide panoply of caricatures. (Even the Tom and Jerry MGM cartoons, which normally made few political references, used Hitler when Jerry uses a match to disfigure a picture of Tom in *The Lonesome Mouse* (Hanna/Barbera, 1943).) Hitler is, literally, a nightmare figure in the Oscar-winning *Der Fuehrer’s Face* (Disney, Kinney, 1943) whose visage forces Donald Duck to salute in a variety of poses. A lupine version of Hitler, brilliantly designed, can be found in Tex Avery’s 1942 MGM classic *The Blitz Wolf*, and a porcine version is used by Mannie Davis in *The Last Roundup* (Terry, 1943), not to mention the avian version in *The Ducktators* (WB, McCabe, 1942). (*The Blitz Wolf* was the source of one of the ripest stories about Fred Quimby, Selzer’s equally feckless counterpart at MGM in the ‘40s and ‘50s — upon seeing Avery’s caricature of Hitler as the Wolf, Quimby advised Avery to tone it down, because, after all, no one knew who was going to win the war.) A realistically designed Hitler gives a sideshow-carny like spiel in *Herr Meets Hare* (WB, Freleng, 1945), in which Bugs himself dons a Hitler disguise, merely by daubing his face and ears with mud to give the appearance of the inimitable (sort of) Hitler forelock and mustache. (Freleng also used a clearly rotoscoped version of Hitler in 1943’s *Daffy - The Commando*, which begs comparison to the realistic and apparently non-roscoped Hitler in *Jungle Drums* (Para, Gordon, 1943), in which Hitler is shown listening to a US radio report.) Hitler literally chews the rug in a sequence in *Scrap Happy Daffy* (WB, Tashlin, 1943), following a helpful dotted line. Disney’s now rarely seen (and often heavy-handed, by 1998 standards) *Education for Death* has one very light spot, in casting Hitler as a Wagnerian hero, particularly appropriate since Hitler was a well-known Wagner fan. Perhaps one of the lengthiest, and funniest, Hitler attacks is in Bob Clampett’s *Russian Rhapsody*, (WB, 1944) where

Hitler’s speech-giving histrionics, aggressiveness and boastfulness are wickedly caricatured as he is eventually undone by a pack of Gremlins from the Kremlin while attempting to bomb Moscow himself. (It’s a notably funnier cartoon than *The Ducktators* (WB, McCabe, 1942), which less effectively uses these same traits.) This cartoon pretty much summarizes the various facets of Hitler’s personality that made him such a prime target, and is a very typical specimen of how animated cartoonists dealt with Hitler.



Tex Avery’s “toned-down” Blitz Wolf

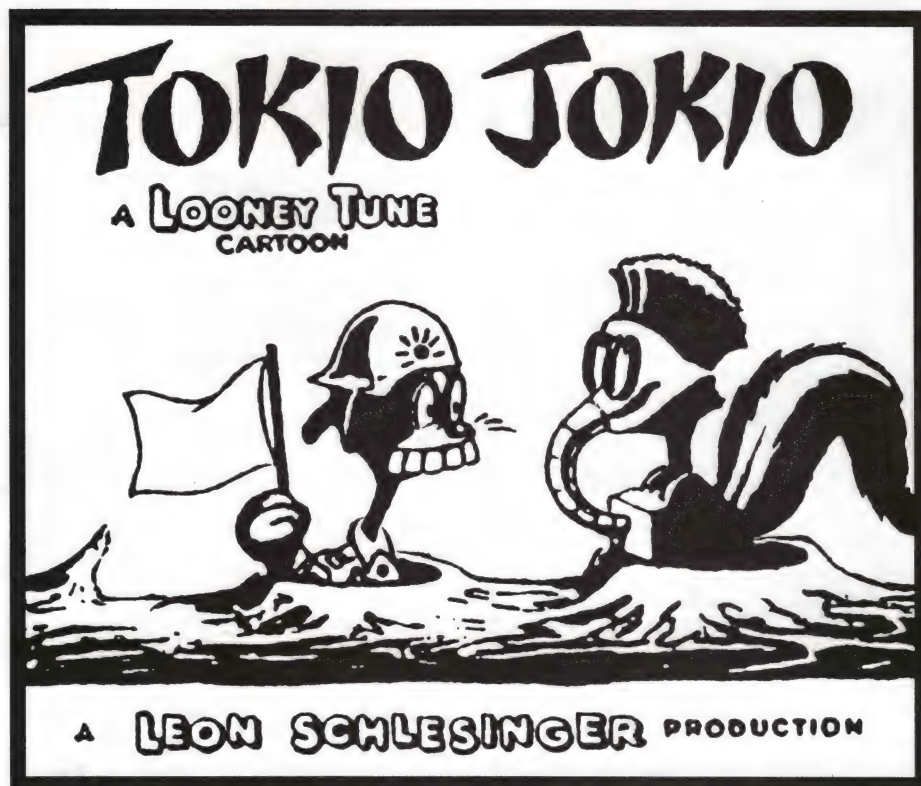
Some of Hitler’s cronies are targets as well. Luftwaffe chief Hermann Goering was probably the second-most caricatured Nazi in Hollywood cartoons, in part because of his enormous girth, and in part because of his love for wearing massive numbers of medals on his uniform. He, too, was an instantly recognizable figure, and was given the honor of being a victim of Bugs Bunny in *Herr Meets Hare*, which, sadly, is rarely seen today (though it is on the video *Bugs and Daffy: The Wartime Years*), especially since the cartoon is a direct precursor of Chuck Jones’s classic *What’s Opera, Doc?* Goering’s use of medals, girth, and love for hunting are all used highly effectively here. (Goering was Reich Forest Master and Reich Master of the Hunt, and was the driving force behind many environmental laws still in effect in Germany today.) *Scrap Happy Daffy* effectively hints at Goering, even though his face is not shown, by merely showing a



bulky figure in a bemedaled uniform talking on the phone. *Der Fuehrer's Face* shows an effete, flute-playing Goering in a medal-bedecked uniform. And, in conjunction with propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels, Goering shoots himself in *Plane Daffy* (WB, Tashlin, 1944), when they commit the faux pas of telling Hitler to his face that everyone knows he's a stinker. It's most surprising that I have not been able to locate more caricatures of Goebbels who, after all, had complete control of the German counterpart of Hollywood. (He is mentioned, but does not appear, in *Der Fuehrer's Face*.) Even a relatively obscure figure like Rudolf Hess, Hitler's former deputy, makes as many appearances; he shows up in *Tokio Jokio* (WB, McCabe, 1943), when he sends Hitler a picture postcard of himself in a British internment camp, which is, in fact, where Hess was after he flew to England in May, 1941 in an effort to negotiate peace with England, an act that was branded as evidence of insanity by the Nazis.

Benito Mussolini, Italy's Fascist leader for decades, has an interesting treatment in Hollywood cartoons. By the time the US declared war on Italy in December, 1941, Italy had suffered a series of reverses in the war, including a failed invasion of Greece, a failed invasion of Egypt, and a string of losses in East Africa, all of which accelerated until 1943, when, after the invasion of Sicily, Mussolini was dismissed by the King of Italy (in *Daffy - The Commando*, the telegram being read by the German vulture carries a picture of the *Apes of Wrath*, being Hitler, a Japanese figure, and a crossed-out Mussolini). Rescued by German commandoes from prison, Mussolini became the puppet dictator of a Northern Italian Fascist Republic, and ultimately died a pathetic death at the hands of partisans in 1945. One of the few straightforward caricatures of Mussolini is in the Private Snafu short *Spies* (WB, Jones, 1943), in which he is seen hiding behind a magazine along with Goering and Japanese Emperor Hirohito. For the most part, Mussolini is treated as either a comic-opera type of Italian (as in his brief appearances in *Der Fuehrer's Face*, or *The Ducktators* or *Scrap Happy Daffy*), or as a has-been or a stooge, reflecting perceptions of his role and status in the war. In *Tokio Jokio*, Mussolini is depicted as another Italian ruin, and in *The Last Round-up*, he is cruelly caricatured as Hitler's monkey, begging for peanuts and grooming Hitler, all the while aping (so to speak) Hitler's performances.

Joseph Stalin, the leader of the USSR,



An unfortunate depiction from a 1943 Warner Bros. publicity card

makes a handful of appearances in cartoons that reflect the peculiar, pro-Soviet view prevalent in much of what was written about Russia during the war, when the Russians were perceived as the US and England's valiant ally. He is seen kicking Hitler's behind in a dream sequence in *Tin Pan Alley Cats* (WB, Clampett, 1943), and is twice used as a means of frightening Hitler, once with a mask wielded by the Gremlins in *Russian Rhapsody*, and once when Bugs Bunny disguises himself as Stalin, complete with trademark pipe and Russian accent. Perhaps just as well the congressional committees of the late 1940's never called Bugs to account for that!

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's instantly recognizable diction, bowler hat and cigar, as well as a deft parody of his prose, is briefly seen when Baby Percy/Butch is sent skidding into the kitchen by Porky Pig in *Brother Brat* (WB, Tashlin, 1944), and he ends up with a pot on his head.

The caricatures of Japanese pose an interesting problem. Comparatively few Japanese were instantly recognizable to American audiences, even if they would have recognized names (like Japanese Prime Minister General Hideki Tojo, mentioned in *Brother Brat*). The Japanese caricatures used in cartoons tended, for the most part, to be the stock buck-teeth-and-eyeglasses caricatures of Japanese that were

popular (if such is the word) for decades (the caricature, allegedly, of Hirohito in *Der Fuehrer's Face* falls in this category.). No real recognizable caricature can be seen in *You're a Sap, Mr. Jap* (Para, 1942, Gordon), *Japoteurs* (Para, 1942, Kneitel), *Scrap the Japs* (Para, Kneitel, 1942) or *The Eleventh Hour* (Para, Gordon, 1942). (It is interesting to note that Paramount/Famous, one of the few East Coast-based studios, made more anti-Japanese cartoons in 1942 than the California studios, which were under much greater fear and possibility of Japanese attacks.) *Seein' Red White 'n Blue* (Para, Gordon, 1943) is one of the few cartoons that I could find that has what appears to be deliberately meant as a caricature of Japanese Emperor Hirohito, in military dress. Tojo himself is caricatured (the caricature is a poor one) in *Tokio Jokio*, in which he demonstrates how to make a Japanese "club" sandwich. We've already met *Tokyo Rose*, the name given to various Japanese propaganda broadcasters, in previous issues.

At present, I have as many findings of World War II-era references to Japanese military leaders than to American military leaders. General Masaharu Homma, who defeated US General Douglas MacArthur in the 1941-1942 Philippine campaign, is shown (as *General Hammer*) running around in a panic in a bombardment, even-

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# I'M AN EAGLE AND I'LL PROVE IT!

## Vaudeville in Warner Bros. Cartoons

There's an amazing moment about halfway through Friz Freleng's brilliant 1946 short *Rhapsody Rabbit* where Bugs Bunny turns towards the camera and shoots a member of the audience with a gun for coughing too loud. Also, in Bob Clampett's bizarre *A Corny Concerto* (1943), Bugs has his arms pulled away from his chest by Elmer to reveal, with embarrassment, that he's wearing a bra. Finally, in another of Avery's cartoons, *Thugs With Dirty Mugs* (1939), an Edward G. Robinson look-alike is thwarted because one of the members of the audience rats him out to the cops!

These three examples, all of which any fan can attest to being typical Warner Bros. moments, call attention to the bizarre nature of this particular stream of Hollywood animation: a relationship with the audience comfortable enough to routinely involve them in the gags on the screen; constant cross-dressing and kissing-as-insult; a hodge-podge mixture of songs and jokes; characters that talked to the audience, describing what they did as they did it (Be vewy, vewy quiet...); ultra-melodramatic death scenes...hey, I'm not questioning their genius, but what the hell is going on in these things?

Well folks, the answer is...vaudeville. While that might seem odd at first, I'm going to show you why it's not. Gag comedy existed in the era of vaudeville during the late 20s and throughout the 30s, and its influence radiated out to all the forms of mass media that eventually overwhelmed it and condemned it to extinction, including radio, theatre, movies and cartoons. Rather than being the tag-along in the preceding list, theatrical-release animation, at least the shorts being produced at Termite Terrace for distribution by Warner

Bros., took the vaudeville aesthetic and put it in fourth gear: a jumble of songs, gags, lunacy, melodrama, animal acts, celebrities and just a little bit of sex, all of it aimed at an audience it respected and treated as an equal.

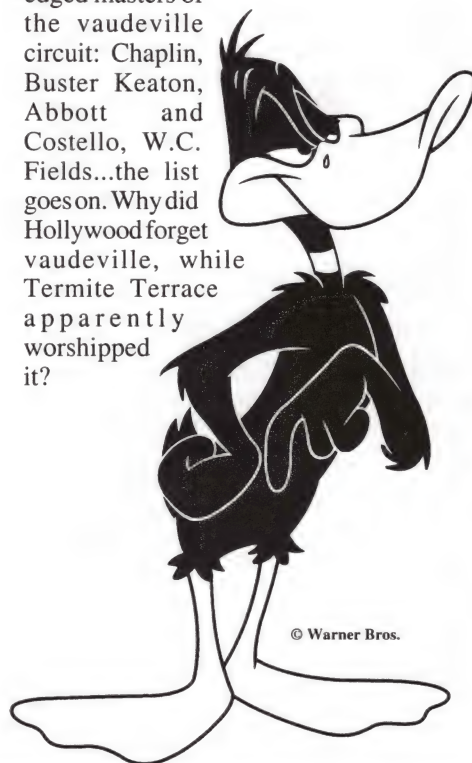
What's interesting about this historical development is how much of the vaude-

ville mode of entertainment that was transferred to Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies was not transferred to feature length live-action films. Why would this brand of entertainment be more completely accepted by the shorts that preceded the main event than by the main event itself? After all, dozens of vaudeville entertainers made the transition to the big screen, including some of the acknowledged masters of the vaudeville circuit: Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Abbott and Costello, W.C. Fields...the list goes on. Why did Hollywood forget vaudeville, while Termite Terrace apparently worshipped it?

by  
**Jason  
Lapeyre**



Bugs Art by John Occhiutto © Warner Bros.



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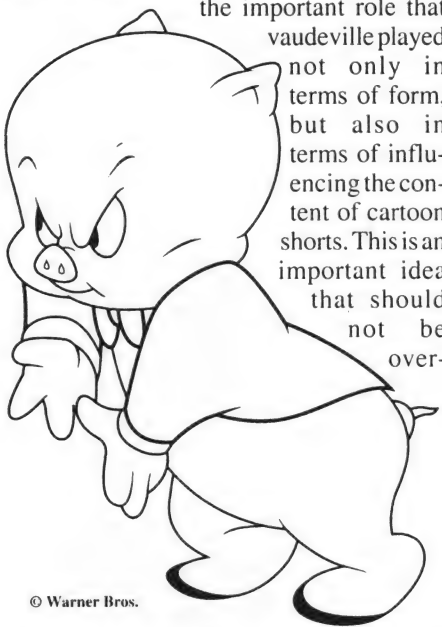


## The Roots of Animation in Vaudeville

Vaudeville plays a bigger historical role in animation than one might suspect: In 1911 Winsor McCay unveiled a semi-animated version of his strip *Little Nemo in Slumberland* during his vaudeville act, and his celebrated *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914) was originally showcased as part of an act in which he would play her trainer on the stage while she took direction on the screen. In fact, this animation evolved naturally from McCay's version of the "chalk talk" routine, a traditional vaudeville act in which a performer would draw caricatures of audience members on a huge chalkboard, and then alter the drawings at lightning speed to make them look older, or distort them much to the amusement of the patrons.

McCay's brilliantly surreal mind took the next logical step in this act, creating a device which would draw so fast as to give the appearance of motion, resulting in the modern animated cartoon. It's common to read in animation histories like Leonard Maltin's *Of Mice and Magic* of the newspaper serial comic strip's importance in the development of cartoons, while neglecting

the important role that vaudeville played not only in terms of form, but also in terms of influencing the content of cartoon shorts. This is an important idea that should not be over-



© Warner Bros.

looked in writing the history of the cartoon medium.

The histories of animation and vaudeville continued to intertwine. Paul Terry, after working in a vaudeville theatre and no doubt soaking up its particular brand of humour, went on to do an animated pilot for a *Mutt and Jeff* series that strip creator Bud Fisher used in a vaudeville act of his own in the mid-teens. The Keith-Albee consortium, which was almost singlehandedly responsible for the rise of vaudeville as an industry, later financed

Terry's immensely popular *Aesop's Fables* series. Other examples abound: Betty Boop's voice and to some degree her image were based on vaudeville performer Helen Kane. The incredibly racist depiction of stereotyped blacks in innumerable cartoons such as Warner Bros. early Bosko shorts or the Van Beuren studio's short-lived *Amos n' Andy* series came from a long tradition of blackface performance on the vaudeville stage by white performers: the animated characters in these cartoons look less like African-Americans than they do white folks in shoe polish. And, the ultimate example, vaudeville and cartoons both took up the same relationship to full length films once movies had caught the public's attention: they opened up the show and set the stage for the feature. There was one studio, however, whose animated product took after vaudeville's vibrant, energetic performance in an act not many could follow.

### Vaudeville Lives!

The evidence that vaudeville influenced Warner Bros. cartoons is overwhelming. It's there in the content of the cartoons: as the vaudeville auditions that make up the plot of *Curtain Razor* (1949, Freleng), as part of Bugs Bunny's showbiz history in *What's Up, Doc?* (1950, McKimson), as the forum for that enigmatic frog in *One Froggy Evening* (1955, Jones), and in the string of variety acts of *Hamateur Night* (1939, Avery). However, and perhaps more importantly, it's there in the cartoons' form. Take, for example, the scene in *Duck Soup To Nuts* (1944, Freleng) where Daffy and Porky argue over whether Porky is a pig or an eagle. This type of exchange happened dozens of times throughout the years in these cartoons, with the participants exchanging arguments so fast that somewhere in the mix they switch sides, leading to Porky's hilariously surreal line, "I'm an eagle and I'll p-p-p-prove it!"

To miss the obvious Abbott and Costello connection here, and indeed the whole vaudeville tradition of wordplay humour, is to overlook an entire tradition of comedy that forms the backdrop of what is known as Warner Bros. humour. As Porky climbs a tree in order to attempt flight so he can prove he's an eagle (look what I just wrote...am I the only one who thinks that Warner Bros. cartoons are the most surreal American art form?), Daffy looks over at us and gives us a knowing eyebrow-raise. This kind of audience acknowledgement was nonexistent in all but a handful of Hollywood films, but one of the few that did indulge in these knowing looks fea-

tured a character more like a Warner Bros. cartoon than any other living being. In fact, the title of the aforementioned cartoon is clearly a reference to one of them: *Duck Soup*, starring Zeppo, Chico, Harpo and Groucho Marx.

The Marx Brothers were headline vaudeville performers from 1929 to 1932, performing on stage even after they made the transition to feature films. It is no coincidence that their brand of feature film humour so closely resembles that of the Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies - there's a serious vaudeville brotherhood between Bugs and Groucho. Bugs Bunny has actually been called "an ersatz Groucho Marx"<sup>1</sup>, and it is in this comparison that what can be called the spirit of vaudeville is revealed: the premise of the vast majority of both genres is that of an unflappable smartass constantly having to deal with a belligerent moron, and inevitably bending reality in order to win. Not only that, but they take the audience onto their team, letting us in on the joke and keeping the belligerent morons in the dark.

Clearly the creative talents working at Termite Terrace aligned themselves with the hepcat protagonists of these stories (understandably, considering the string of commerce-driven and ignorant pinheads they had to deal with at Warners) much as the Marx Brothers sought to carve out this identity for themselves on stage and screen. What was it about this smartass identity that allowed these performers to break down the fourth wall and talk to their audience so easily?

### Vaudeville: Working Class Theatre

Vaudeville was brought out of New York's Bowery slums, where it existed as burlesque houses and concert saloons with performers who had to fight, sometimes literally, for the attention of their drunken audiences. The man responsible for moving it onto Union Square and consequently in front of a wider audience was a performer-manager named Tony Pastor, who realized that the key to vaudeville's appeal was the special relationship between the working-class performers and the working-class patrons: it was entertainers that audiences could relate to, that spoke to them as equals rather than as Elizabethan ghosts from the past or wealthy Opera singers. Anthony Slide, author of *The Encyclopedia of Vaudeville*, has written about vaudeville as "the people's entertainment", and the "comfortable rapport that existed between performer and spectator based on the awareness of mutual financial status."<sup>2</sup>



How, I'm pretty sure you're asking, does this relate to cartoons? Well, it established a tradition of intimacy between performers and audiences that was dissolved by mass media such as movies and television, but lived on in the spirit of animated shorts, most noticeably in Warner Bros.' Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies. When one learns of the energy and spirit vaudeville had, it only adds to the tragedy that is the death of the theatrical cartoon.

The Warner Brothers film studio already had a reputation by the beginning of the thirties as making movies about regular working people, with its gangster and social-problem-film cycles demonstrating this theme constantly in such films as *Scarface* (1931) and *I am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang* (1932). Therefore, it encouraged the tendency to speak to the audience on this level in the animated shorts that preceded its films as well. However, the cartoons took it about ten steps further than the movies ever did. It's completely commonplace for any of Tex Avery's cartoons from the '30s to feature a gag involving the silhouette of an audience member interrupting the action on the screen, whether the cartoons stop to let them get to their seat or, as mentioned, the audience members actually affect the outcome of the story. The reason that these things happened in cartoons and not in movies has to do with both the way the animators saw their audience and the way the audience saw the films.

It was a two-sided communication: on the one hand, the animators knew who they were talking to - the characters have working class Brooklyn accents (Bugs, Daffy, Sylvester), use wisecracks aimed at the boss and were frequently involved in situations involving being late for work at the factory (*Tick Tock Tuckered*, 1944, Clampett), getting drafted (*Draftee Daffy*, 1945, Clampett) or working on a construction site (*Rhapsody in Rivets*, 1941, Freleng). The audiences, on the other hand, knew that these weren't real people at all, so they didn't have to elevate them economically to the status of superior "movie stars." They were just wisecracks dealing with problems similar to the ones *they* had to face - angry bosses, wartime rationing and attempts to make leisure time.

Here, I think, is the answer to my original question: why didn't Hollywood's brand of humour and drama evolve from vaudeville in the same direct way that these cartoons apparently did? Well, as I've said: it's hard for an audience to feel like they

have an intimate relationship with (a) someone projected flat on a screen; and, (b) someone making a hundred thousand dollars to read lines into a camera while they pound together plastic cockpit shells at the Lockheed factory. The special ability that cartoons had, their secret power to make fun of everything while winking at the audience, derived from their ability to stay on the same level as the people they were speaking to.

### Bugs, Creature from Vaudeville

Bearing this in mind, consider the following comparison between vaudeville and Warner Bros. cartoons, and why it's a crying shame that neither of them are around anymore: Mary Cass Canfield describes a typical comedian on the vaudeville stage in a 1922 issue of *New Republic*:

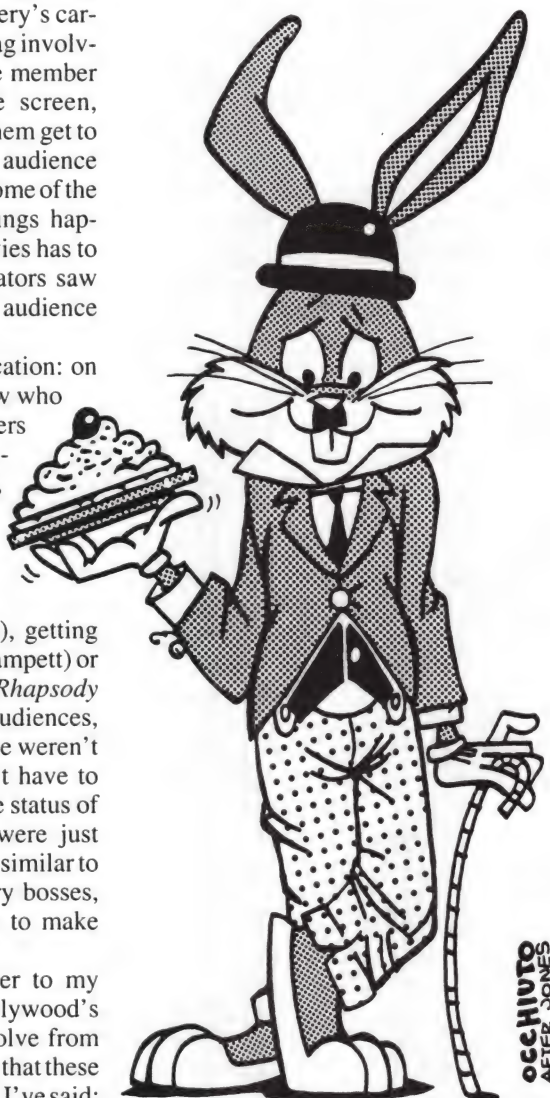
He jokes with the orchestra leader, he tells his hearers fabricated confidential tales

about the management, the other actors, the whole entrancing world behind the scenes; he addresses planted confederates in the third row, or the gallery and proceeds to make fools of them to the joy of all present...The audience becomes a part of the show and enjoys it. And there is a community art for you...<sup>3</sup>

If there is any one distinguishing feature of the Termite Terrace cartoons, it is the degree to which they play *to* the audience rather than *for* them: Elmer tells you what he's doing as he does it, Daffy gives us knowing winks, Bugs tells us what a boob his victim is, they ALL take shots at Jack Warner, and all the while we get the joke; we get to be in on the gag. This is the magic of these particular cartoons, and it is a magic that descends from the very brand of humour described by Ms. Canfield.

The comparisons hardly stop there. One frustrating aspect of animation history has been an explanation for the seemingly inexplicable tendency of Bugs Bunny and other characters to constantly dress up as women. A devoted Warner Bros. fan has recently identified *twenty-seven* individual instances of Bugs' cross-dressing throughout the years.<sup>4</sup> This trend can't really be found in movies or television, with obvious rare exceptions like Milton Berle (can you see this one coming?). Well, guess where Milton Berle got his start? That's right - a reviewer from *Variety* explains how cross-dressing was perceived at the time in a review for a vaudeville show: *"Just as a white man makes the best stage negro, so a man gives a more photographic interpretation of femininity than the average woman is able to give."*

The utter sexism of this holdover from 16th century drama reveals how Bugs was able to throw on a dress and lipstick with no hint of homosexuality or transvestism. It was common enough in vaudeville to be considered a type of act, with renowned male performers garnering applause for being indistinguishable from women and returning from Paris sporting the latest dresses and fashions, including one man who started an uproar by wearing an ankle bracelet. These men weren't treated as outcasts or social misfits (they couldn't have been...homosexuality wasn't even *acknowledged* by 19th century society) - it was simply their act. One can draw a straight line directly from this vaudeville tradition to Bugs' behaviour.<sup>6</sup> A similar comparison can be made between the traditions of the dramatic monologue and Bugs' constant melodramatic death scenes - it's just another example of vaudeville's influence on the kinds of things cartoons would joke



© Warner Bros.





Warner's Jolson parody "Al Goatson"

watching. They're completely aware of their status as pre-movie introductions, and in this way are allowed to talk to the patrons at their level, taking shots at celebrities and joking about the lack of leg room in the theatre, as a dog with enormous feet discovers for himself in Avery's *Hamateur Night*.

#### Hamateur Night at Warner Bros.

As I've said, the physical presence of vaudeville is blatantly evident in dozens of the Warner shorts, but more importantly, I feel, is the evidence of vaudeville's stylistic presence as it informed the slapstick of the Looney Tune world. These stylistic trends in Termite Terrace's work are easily spotted in any number of the theatrical shorts from the late 30s until the early 50s: most easily identified is the straight-man/gag-man routine, but other tip-offs include popular songs; direct audience address; monologues; celebrity impersonations; dancing; gags based on wordplay; slapstick; pratfalls and finally plots that were little more than strung together segments of the above mentioned elements. For those more interested in specifically vaudevillean cartoon moments, however, check out the following shorts, all of which are available on laserdisc at specialty videomaticas:

#### *Hamateur Night* (1939, Tex Avery):

You can get some idea of where this cartoon's heart is by the opening shot: a theatre entrance. As you've probably guessed from my constant references to it throughout, this early Tex Avery short is

replete with hilarious examples that demonstrate just how in tune with the audience Avery was: there are several jokes throughout about the uncomfortable seats and obnoxious patrons in the theatre. This is exactly the type of audience rapport I've been discussing: where the experiences of the people watching the show make up the show. The vaudeville references abound as well: a series of variety acts, including a piano player, singer, mystic, recitation, dog act (in which the dog gives a thundering oration) and high drama. The classic stage hook is also around as a positive i.d. of vaudeville's influence.

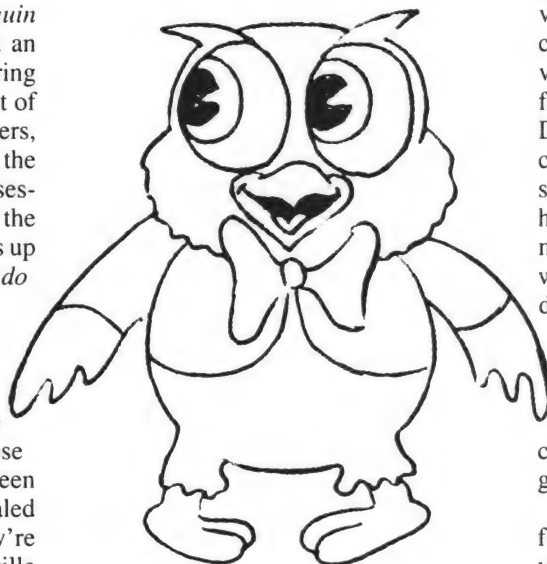
*Thugs with Dirty Mugs* (1939, Tex Avery): More of an attempt at a film parody than a variety act, this short includes a couple of distinctly vaudevillean jokes. Rather than having the audience as actual characters in the story, as in *Hamateur Night*, Avery goes a step further and simply pretends that the film's actual audience is interacting with the film. Using rotoscoping to make the effect eerily realistic, a man attempts to leave the theatre halfway through only to be threatened into returning to his seat by the Edward G. Robinson-esque leader of the canine gang. Of course, the same man later rats out the dogs to the pigs.

Also in this cartoon is a moment of direct audience address where the gangleader acknowledges his resemblance to Eddie Robinson, and then proceeds to do a Fred Allen imitation. Allen, who appeared in film, television and on the stage, was a performer known to this day primarily as a vaudeville entertainer.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Duck Soup to Nuts* (1944, Freleng):

This short, a dynamo of lunacy that may very well be the champion of Warner Bros. cartoons, has the energy and zing of vaudeville as the stage under its feet. The film's first line is addressed to the audience, as Daffy points out "I kinda stand out in a crowd, don't I?" Instantly, Porky is on the scene, only getting a couple of blasts out of his shotgun before he's become the straight man to Daffy's pleas for mercy, during which he sings, dances, imitates Al Jolson, demonstrates his melodramatic acting ability and proves his talent by showing Porky his contract with Warner Brothers. Any of these routines would be common on the vaudeville stage, especially the in-jokes about industry shenanigans.

At this point, the cartoon, now forty-five seconds in, picks up the pace using a vaudeville gag with more whiskers on it than the Fuller Brush man routine: Daffy asks Porky about phrenology, the study of



Owl Jolson © Warner Bros.

about at the time.

More proof for your consideration: celebrities appearing in Warner Bros. cartoons - Ed Wynn, Groucho Marx, Eddie Cantor, Al Jolson, Fred Allen, Laurel and Hardy, Abbott and Costello (constantly), Jerry Colonna...all popular in film and radio, granted, but all from vaudeville backgrounds. At the very least, this is testament to the influence vaudeville had on popular culture at the time. Consider: Joe Frisco, a headlining comedian from 1927 - 30 whose main gimmick was a persistent stutter. Ring any bells? Consider: the constant jokes about recitations, wherein very young girls would recite simple nursery rhymes in an adorable, giggly manner (seen in *Cross Country Detours*, 1940, Avery; *Hamateur Night*; *Curtain Razor*) were a direct reference to a type of vaudeville act intended to either clear seats between shows or kill time while people were being seated.

Finally, consider: an entire cartoon that serves as an example of vaudeville's influence is Tex Avery's 1938 *The Penguin Parade*, a recounting of one night at an antarctic club with variety acts appearing one after the other. Running the gamut of hosts, comedians, musicians and dancers, it ends with a bandleader turning to the camera after a typical Avery hot jazz session and saying, "If you people in the audience think we're going to keep this up all night, then you're screwy...and we do mean you!"

I don't intend these references to be a string of circumstantial evidence, but rather to indicate the degree to which the experience of the audience made up the basis of the humour in these films - that is, whereas stage and screen attempt to create a hermetically sealed world for the audience to feel like they're voyeuristically spying in on, vaudeville and cartoons never forget or try to conceal that the audience is always there, always



the bumps on one's head, and sure enough, provides him with several to be interpreted. Taking the action underwater at this point, Daffy thwarts Porky's underwater attack with (sigh) the fuller Brush man routine. One of the most sparkling facets of this comedy diamond is Mel Blanc's incredibly energetic performance, not to mention Freleng's sly timing or its surreal logic (such as when Porky decides to outwit Daffy by bailing out the lake). Please check it out.

**The Hep Cat (1942, Clampett):** This cool, swaggering-with-attitude cartoon almost comes off as a musical comedy, but the vaudeville influence is still plain as day. Starting out with a softshoe, it runs right into a chase ending with a classic one-liner worthy of Burns and Allen:

**Little Birdy:** Gee whillikers, you almost got him tonight.

**Dog:** I almost get him every night....

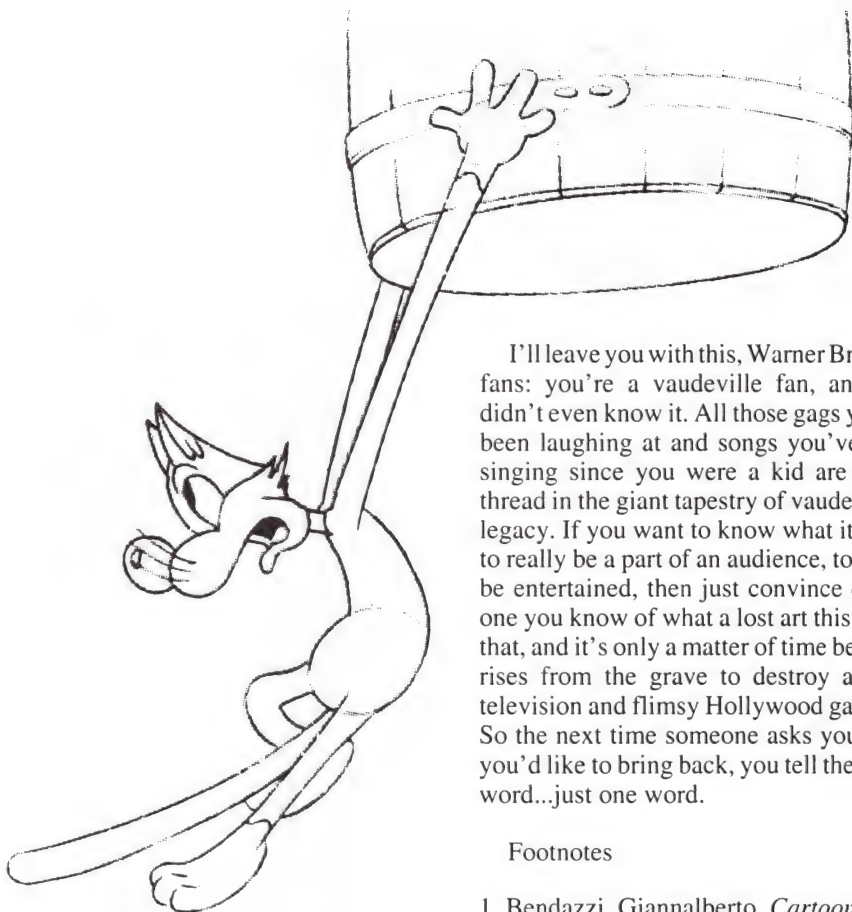
The main character's song is sung to the audience, and the film's celebrity impersonation is that of Jerry Colonna, whose catchphrases "Something NEW has been added!" and "I can DREAM, can't I?" are used to great effect here. The other, more unfortunate remnant of vaudeville in this cartoon are its ethnic stereotypes used for humour, in this case a French "wolf" seducing a beautiful woman.

### Vaudeville's Not For Everyone...

As you can see from the directors mentioned above, it would be a fair guess to say that Chuck Jones was the least influenced by vaudeville and the most interested in creating "cinematic" cartoons. This argument is supported by his art school background and his typically classical concerns. For example, it's the rare Jones cartoon that features jazz, which was a mainstay of Avery and Clampett's work. And, as we all know, his masterworks include the reworked Operas *Rabbit of Seville* (1950) and *What's Opera, Doc* (1957). While his work may have featured vaudeville (as in *One Froggy Evening*, although I think it's there more to evoke the film's setting in the '20s than to indicate any affinity for the venue itself), it rarely exhibited vaudeville's stylistic fingerprints as clearly as the other mad scientists at the Terrace.

### The Return of Vaudeville

There's a tradition of cultural commentary that seems to run through all of the greatest examples of animation: whether it's *Yellow Submarine* and hippies, *Mr. Bug Goes to Town* and urbanization, *Fat Albert* and black inner city life, *Beavis and*



A pencil drawing from *The Hep Cat*  
© Warner Bros.

*Butthead* and America in general, a primary source of humour has been making observations about the social climate that these cartoons came out of. Well, it's harder to spot in the Warner Brothers cartoons because the things they're talking about aren't even here anymore.

Things like the draft, rationing, the war, burgeoning industrialization that included everybody you knew working on an assembly line or doing highway construction...these are the things that Warner Brothers cartoons made fun of in exactly the same way that *The Simpsons* makes fun of gun control, family values, parenting, violence in the media, and television. Modern life in the first part of the 1900s had a great deal to do with vaudeville, and any form of entertainment had to fall under its umbrella, just as modern life in the second half of the 1900s has a great deal to do with television, and any form of entertainment has to fall under its umbrella. The genius of Termite Terrace, fortunately for us all, is that it picked up the umbrella off the floor of the movie theatres, and carried it proudly for another thirty years.

I'll leave you with this, Warner Brothers fans: you're a vaudeville fan, and you didn't even know it. All those gags you've been laughing at and songs you've been singing since you were a kid are just a thread in the giant tapestry of vaudeville's legacy. If you want to know what it's like to really be a part of an audience, to really be entertained, then just convince everyone you know of what a lost art this is. Do that, and it's only a matter of time before it rises from the grave to destroy all bad television and flimsy Hollywood garbage. So the next time someone asks you what you'd like to bring back, you tell them one word...just one word.

### Footnotes

- 1 Bendazzi, Giannalberto. *Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation*. Indiana University Press. 1994. Bloomington.
- 2 Slide, Anthony. *The Encyclopedia of Vaudeville*. Greenwood Press. 1994. Westport.
- 3 Snyder, Robert W. *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York*. New York. 1989. Oxford University Press.
- 4 Jon Cooke's *Cartoons & Stuff* <http://www.megalink.net/~cooke>
- 5 *ibid*
- 6 This tendency reflects the underlying sexism of Termite Terrace's (and Hollywood's) output: there appear to be no women in any roles that aren't that of a bitter housewife, sultry singer, haggard Grandma, or some other annoyance to the main, male characters. Any other female required by the story was simply filled in by cartoons in costume.
- 7 Slide, Anthony. *The Encyclopedia of Vaudeville*. Greenwood Press. 1994. Westport.

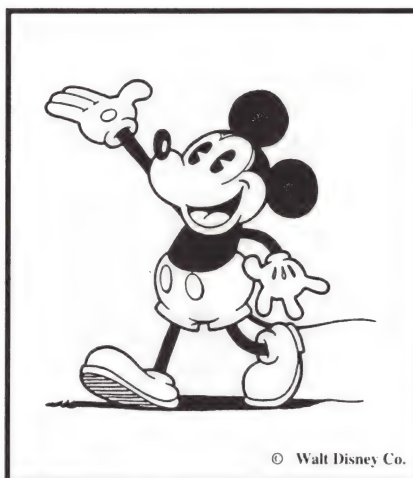
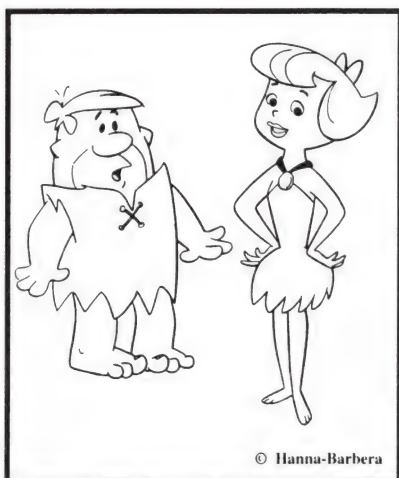




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# Women in Animation

## MARY DORIS BERLINER CAIN

by Libby Simon

Born in Port Arthur, Texas on July 5, 1916, Mary Doris Berliner moved to Los Angeles with her family when she was a young child. She attended Le Conte Junior High and Hollywood High School and became an excellent student, graduating high school at the age of 14 in 1930. She was accepted to Stanford and wanted to become a lawyer, but when her parents lost their Hollywood Boulevard restaurant during the Depression, Mary had to support her family instead of going to college.

In 1931, she began working at the Charles Mintz Studio, supplier of *Krazy Kat* and *Scrappy* shorts for Columbia Pictures. There, she worked as a cel painter and met Preston Blair, Irv Spence and Don and Ray Patterson. In 1939, Columbia Pictures took over the studio from Charles Mintz because of debts owed to them, and renamed the studio Screen Gems. At Screen Gems, Mary worked her way up the ladder to become the assistant supervisor of the Ink and Paint Department.

During the Disney strike in 1941, Frank Tashlin, as creative head of Screen Gems, hired many of the striking artists, including Zack Schwartz, John Hubley, Sam Cobeau, Emery Hawkins, Dave Hilberman, Howard Swift and Howard Baldwin. Mary Cain

said, in a videotaped interview in 1994, that the fresh talent changed everything at the studio.

In 1943 Dave Hilberman and Zack Schwartz rented, as Mary calls it, "a one room cubby hole where they hatched their dreams." The little studio was located on the third floor of the Otto K. Olsen Building on Vine and Selma. With a promotional film for Hughes Aircraft now in their

The new studio was called Industrial Films and Poster Service, and the company's first employee, Adrian Woolery, called upon Mary Cain to gather people for the Ink and Paint Department from amongst her friends at Screen Gems. Every day from January to July of 1944, Mary went to her job at Screen Gems during the day, then to Industrial Films, never leaving before four or five in the

morning, each night sleeping only a few hours, then going back to Screen Gems for a full day of work and repeating the pattern. People from all over the industry volunteered their time to work after hours on the Roosevelt film project, as everyone wanted to see him re-elected. Bud Cure, owner of Acme Tool Company was fascinated with the dedicated group and gave them equipment and a camera. Mary remembers it as an exciting and idealistic time.

The studio eventually changed its name

to United Productions of America (UPA). When the UAW/CIO asked them to produce another film, *Brotherhood of Man*, the three owners asked Mary to leave Screen Gems and supervise their Ink and Paint Department. Although UPA's future was not entirely secure, and Mary had her family to support, the offer was exciting enough to entice her.

At the celebration commemorating the



Mary Cain at UPA circa 1950

repertoire, they were introduced by actress Karen Morley to the leaders of the United Auto Workers Union. The UAW/CIO asked Bosustow, Hilberman and Schwartz to make a film promoting Franklin D. Roosevelt's fourth term as President. With a budget of \$15,000, they created a 10 minute film titled *Hell Bent for Election* with Chuck Jones directing and storyboards by Bill Hurtz and Phil Eastman.





*Rear standing L to R: Bill Melendez, Adrian Woolery, George Woolery, Bernard Gruver, Al Halderson, Hugh Kelly, Broor Lansing, Bob Gillis, Ted Woolery, Ed Levitt, Chris Jenkyns, Allen Childs*  
*Front seated L to R: Mary Mathews, Irene "Pee Wee" Wyman, Flora Hastings, Faith Kovaleski, Beverly Robbins, Maureen Beaty, Eleanor Warren, Gwen Dotzler, Helen Jordan, Mary Cain, Sterling Sturdevant (Playhouse Pictures photo)*

end of the War, Mary remembers all of the UPA staff watching the VJ Day Parade from the studio rooftop with Frank Sinatra in the motorcade. UPA was doing well, and a larger facility was needed. They hired the young, innovative architect, John Lautner to build their new studio. In the meantime, the staff was housed in two buildings; some upstairs from a lumber company on Highland Avenue in Hollywood and the rest in an office building that looked like a motel one block away. Mary supervised about twenty-five women in the Ink and Paint Department and had to run back and forth between the two buildings for six months.

After moving into the new studio (located next to the Smokehouse Restaurant in Burbank) they realized that there were problems with the building. The heating under the floors couldn't be adjusted, the

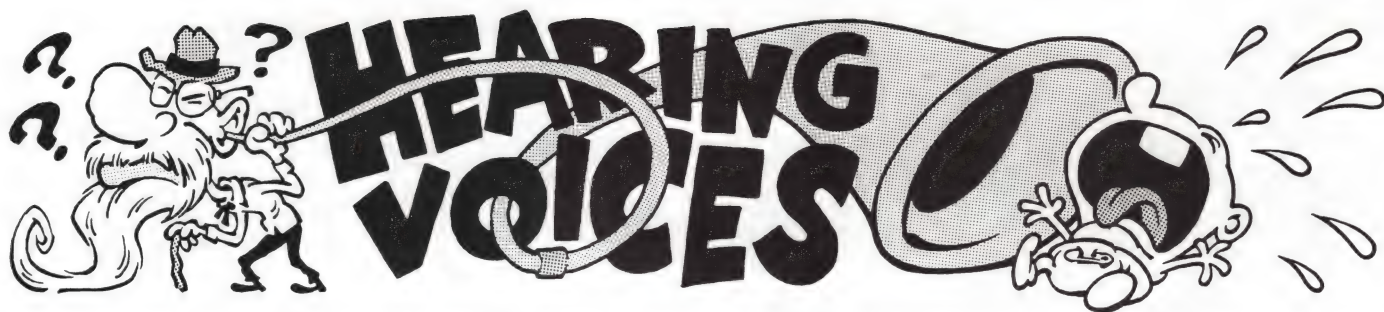
floors became too hot, and everyone's legs swelled and they had to keep their feet raised up off the hot floor. Some of the glass was not yet in the windows and on the first day in the new studio, January 10, 1949, it snowed in Los Angeles, so they had to set up bonfires for warmth. The studio soon outgrew its new home and expanded to two motel annexes. Work poured in and they produced six cartoons a year for Columbia. The Ink and Paint Department got used to many different techniques used by the innovative directors. By the time *Gerald McBoing Boing* was produced, nothing surprised Mary and her crew. The UPA style wasn't forged in order to save money, it was "modern and stunning." Mary's favorite person to work with was BoBe Cannon, who used a full-length mirror to act out his animation scenes. There was no formality, no time cards, but

as time went on it became a little more regimented.

Mary left UPA in April of 1952 to start her own studio, the second ever (Betty Brennan's being the first). Mary's studio was located on Highland Avenue. At one point she was working for thirty producers, and had a contract to do 50% of UPA's work. After cashing his stock in UPA to start his own studio, Playhouse Pictures, Adrian Woolery moved into the rear warehouse just behind Mary's studio and hired her to do all their ink and paint. Having been taught by Herb Klynn in color work, Mary also set the color for the commercials for Playhouse. In 1956 Woolery bought the property on La Brea Avenue across from the Chaplin Studios (now A & M Records) to build his studio which is still located there.

*Continued on Page 129*





## Vocal Imitations in the Jay Ward Cartoons

by Keith Scott

Since animated cartoons first learned to talk, their soundtracks have relied on a relatively tiny community of voice specialists: those actors who toil, often exclusively, behind the microphone. Blissfully content to remain unseen, they are professionally known as "voice-overs."

From the very start of the theatrical animation era and on through the myriad TV cartoon series of the last thirty-five years, the character voice artists employed to bring pen-and-ink characters to vocal life have often relied on imitations of famous personalities. Sometimes these imitations are highly exaggerated; at other times they are startlingly accurate.

The Jay Ward TV cartoons, with their emphasis on satirically sophisticated scripts delivered at a furious clip by expert voice talents, were particularly rich with celebrity imitations. But unlike the mimicry heard in the earlier theatrical toons, the Ward Productions takeoffs were not matched with visual caricatures of the stars whose voices were being aped. Rather, these impressions were used simply as handy vocal devices for a huge menagerie of once-off supporting characters, both animal and human.

Although this trend was partially intentional, it was mainly convenient—the result of the awesome vocal repertoires belonging to Paul Frees and Daws Butler, two of Jay Ward's most versatile voice artists who between them performed literally hundreds of non-regular bit characters in the cartoons and commercials made by Ward Productions.

For the purposes of this article it will be helpful to briefly recap the careers of these two stalwarts of the Jay Ward stock company.

This article covers only those four Jay Ward performers who were skilled at a vast range of voices, i.e. Paul Frees, Daws Butler, Bill Scott and June Foray. Regular readers will already know that Ward's other voice actors (William Conrad, Edward Everett Horton, Charlie Ruggles, Walter



June Foray

Tetley, Hans Conried, Chris Allen) were essentially "one voice" artists, particularly the narrators. It could of course be argued that Conried, gifted with a range of comedy accents, was in fact a walking imitation of his lifelong hero John Barrymore.

The diminutive Daws Butler grew up as a chronically shy youth who wanted to be a cartoonist. As "sort of self-inflicted therapy" he began entering talent quests and soon worked up an act of radio impressions with two other men of short stature. They called themselves The Three Short Waves and spent a few years in Midwestern nightclubs. With the outbreak of World

War II, Butler joined the Navy. Upon his discharge he got married and then migrated to the West Coast, where he drifted into radio acting. This soon led to his first cartoon job, a 1949 MGM classic called *Little Rural Riding Hood* for the great director Tex Avery. In this film, Butler supplied his first animated vocal imitation, a funny parody of the urbane actor George Sanders. This took him to his famous pairing with co-voice Stan Freberg on the TV puppet show *Time for Beany*, in turn leading Butler to the top of the tree in early TV animation voice work for Hanna Barbera and, eventually, Jay Ward.



HEY, BULLWINKLE, IS IMITATION THE SINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY?

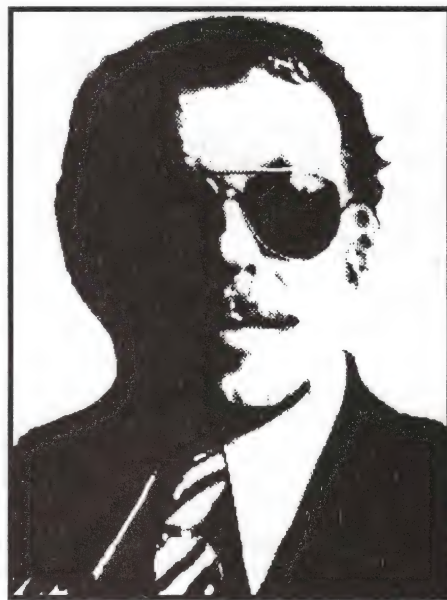


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tal chatter was incessant and human speech in all its infinite inflection and variety was heard constantly. Gifted with the mimic's "ear," Butler and Frees—like human sponges—absorbed the myriad radio personalities of the day, and were able to faithfully reproduce many familiar and well-loved voices.

Movies, too, were grist to their mill: the Jay Ward actors spent their teens and early twenties—those crucial formative years of performer's skills—watching movie after movie along with millions of other Americans, all of whom sought daily refuge and escape from the harsh realities of the Depression era. Many of the imitations in the Jay Ward cartoons were, in fact, takeoffs of those highly familiar character actors who populated the hundreds of films made during the heyday of the studio system.

Finally, there was vaudeville: already in its death throes, this form of entertainment was the true training ground for Frees and Butler. As young Midwest nightclub mimics they were exposed for several years to the colorful troupe of performers who trod the boards in the last years of this variety medium. And like many others who gradu-

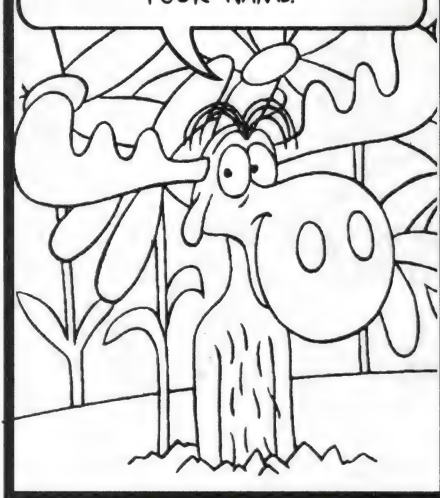


Paul Frees

ated to radio and cartoon acting, they carried the vaudeville tradition—broad character farce and comic dialect stereotypes—over into the newer entertainment media.

For the supporting features on the Rocky and Bullwinkle TV shows, Daws Butler handled the more whimsical entries (*Fractured Fairytales*, *Aesop and Son*) while Paul Frees essayed the satirical balance (*Peabody's Improbable History*, *Dudley Do-Right*).

CERTAINLY, ROCK-UNLESS SOMEONE SIGNS A CHECK IN YOUR NAME!

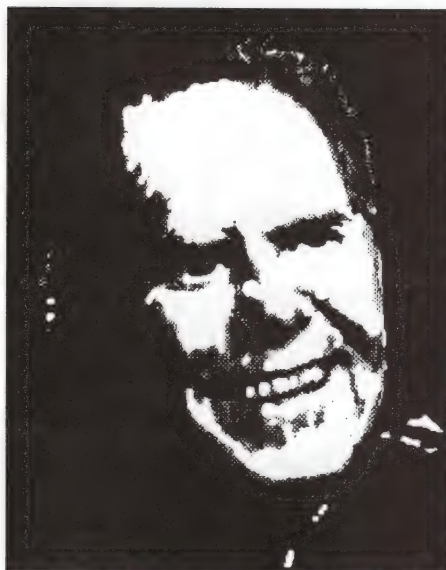


During the time Daws was working for Jay Ward, he was also "starring" as most of Hanna-Barbera's contemporary TV characters—almost all of which were based on exaggerated impressions, viz: Yogi Bear (which started as Art Carney), Hokey Wolf (Phil Silvers), Snagglepuss (based on Bert Lahr's Cowardly Lion from *The Wizard of Oz*), Wally Gator (Ed Wynn), Super Snooper (Ed "Archie" Gardner from the radio comedy *Duffy's Tavern*), and both Lippy the Lion and Peter Potamus (Joe E. Brown). For obvious reasons—including copyright—Butler couldn't perform these voices for Jay Ward. There were exceptions, however. For instance, Ward adored Butler's Phil "Sergeant Bilko" Silvers voice and used it on numerous occasions.

Unlike Butler and Frees, Bill Scott and June Foray were not mimics per se. They were actors, first and foremost. The most abundantly gifted member of Ward's team, Bill Scott was cartoonist, writer, creative head, chief voice and bottle washer. His comic talent contained the twin sensibilities of the literary and the stand-up—a rare combination. Scott graduated from the University of Denver with degrees in speech and dramatics, and, while in college, he enacted several roles on local radio productions—soap operas, westerns, etc. Here he developed the incredible range of dialects and comic "bit" characters he would later deploy at Ward Productions.

The final (and only surviving) member of Jay Ward's "multi-voice" company was the legendary June Foray. Apart from a few rare instances where she did vocal carbons, Foray's forte was original characters—she is an actress who mainly "cre-





Daws Butler

ates" voices to fit the occasion. For Jay Ward, she essayed a vast array of excellent dialects and comic "types," including breathless princesses, ultra-wicked witches, snooty dowagers, ugly sisters, slinky seductresses, virtuous heroines, and evil old hags. A fine example of her range was displayed in the *Aesop and Son*, and *Fractured Fairy Tales* (the best example being the Disney-esque prince who creates Sleeping Beauty Land). Butler also did a funny takeoff of Jerry Lewis, heard in fairy tales like *The Little Tinker*, or as the villainous Salvador Rag Dolly in an episode of *Super Chicken*. This voice was then given a long workout when it was molded into the character of Quisp in Ward's many commercials for Quisp and Quake breakfast cereals.

Butler's other imitations included several in the *George of the Jungle* series: Georgie Jessel (as Doctor Chicago), Bela Lugosi (as Count Lew Gosi), Peter Lorre (the witch doctor in Ungawa the Gorilla God), Richard Haydn (Sir Alfred Canine in *The Chi Chi Dog*), and John Wayne (as an enemy of Super Chicken named Wild Ralph Hiccup). He also did Gary Cooper (for the title role of Hawkear in a Jay Ward pilot that didn't make it to series status), W.C. Fields (in the fairy tale *The Mysterious Castle*), Hugh Herbert (in the Burry's Cookies commercials), and Clarence Hartzell. Hartzell, a favorite of Butler's, was an actor in the Chicago radio series *Vic and Sade*, in which he played Uncle Fletcher. Butler had used his voice for Seymour Nudnik in the *George of the Jungle* entry *Kings Back to Back*, and Jay Ward suggested he revive it for Professor Goody in the Aunt Jemima's Waffles commercials.

Without doubt Daws Butler's most productive imitation for Jay Ward was that of Charlie Butterworth. Butterworth was a character actor who played indecisive ditherers in movies from the 1930s, and his voice was imitated by Butler in many fairy tales featuring absentminded kings. Again at Ward's suggestion Butler used this voice, slightly broadened, for the long-running Quaker commercial star Cap'n Crunch.

Paul Frees was the one Jay Ward actor who could be most likened to a traditional nightclub impressionist, and indeed he released two record albums displaying this facet of his talent—*Paul Frees and the Poster People* and *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* (MGM Records, 1971 and 1972).

Frees's many imitations for Ward, particularly strong in the Peabody segments, included: Winston Churchill (the Moon Men's leader), Chico Marx (Vittorio Vermicelli), Ed Wynn (for two regular characters, Captain Peachfuzz and Fred, the loyal valet to Super Chicken), Ronald Colman (an ape named Ape), Akim Tamiroff (Boris Badenov), Jack Benny (Alexander Graham Bell), Gregory Ratoff (Rimsky), Charles Laughton (Sheriff of Nottingham), Boris Karloff (Oddpuss Rex), Peter Lorre (Pottsylvania scientist), Eric Blore (another great impression used for two regulars, Inspector Fenwick and the District Commissioner), Henry Daniell (Scotland Yard inspector), Percy Kilbride (Peter Cooper), Dale Robertson (Texas Ranger Hotchkiss), Maxie Rosenbloom (Jake Kilrain's manager), Victor McLaglen (O'Hara), Bert Lahr (Ptolemy), Victor Moore (James Whistler), Robert Newton (Weevil), Lionel Stander ("What else—I'm a pigeon"), Gabby Hayes (the Frostbite Falls ticket clerk), Charley Grapewin (grizzled old prospector), Humphrey Bogart (villains in Hoppity Hooper), Orson Welles (Dorson Belles), Westbrook Van Voorhis (Frees's ever-present narrator), Lou Costello (The Masked Martin), Walter Catlett (Mayor Fiorello La Pompano), Clarence Kolb (The Geezer), Ned Sparks (Chauncey of Chauncey and Edgar), Ed Gardner (King Bushwick), Thurston Hall (Senator Fussmussen and other Congressmen), and Rod Serling (the obvious choice to narrate the Hoppity Hooper story *The Traffic Zone*). Frees often joked about his profligate use of impressions, admitting, "I make my living from dead people!"

Interestingly, Frees's greatest Jay Ward character, that master of disguise Boris Badenov, only ever used one vocal imitation: he did Charles Boyer while trying to seduce the Oogle bird in the Rocky and Bullwinkle adventure *Greenpernt Oogle*.



Bill Scott

Bill Scott's occasional imitations included: Edward G. Robinson (Tiny Tony Tuxedo, aka Little Scissor), radio character Wallace Wimple (Scott's version of the Droopy voice, and his most frequently used vocal impression, heard for example as the hero in the fairy tale *The Fisherman's Wishes*), Bob Newhart (heard in various *Fractured Flickers* and *Hoppity Hooper* cartoons), Peter Lorre (the fearsome Mr. Big), comedian Eddie Lawrence (The Old Philosopher used in several *Fractured Flickers*—"What's the matter, Bunky?"), and of course Clifton Webb, the prissy template for Mr. Peabody. As well, Scott was responsible for the third Bert Lahr impression in this survey, when he played the hungry lion in the *Aesop* episode *Androcles and the Lion*.



© Jay Ward Productions

#### Factoid:

Bill Scott's voice characterization of Bullwinkle J. Moose is the most imitated by aspiring voice impressionists.

Art by Al Kilgore



Finally, June Foray's relatively few imitations included: Mae West (in the Æsop fable *The Vain Crow*), the Cockney character actress Una O'Connor, her oft-used hilarious takeoff of Marjorie Main, and a devastating send-up of Hollywood gossip queen Louella Parsons in the short Rocky and Bullwinkle adventure *The Last Angry Moose*.

With the passage of almost forty years since *Rocky and His Friends* premiered in 1959, many of these voice imitations will likely be lost on audiences of today. To those younger viewers who watch Rocky and Bullwinkle's adventures on the Cartoon Network, most of the aforementioned vocal caricatures would be perceived simply as "character" voices. To that end this article is offered as a lighthearted albeit accurate guide for anyone interested in the art of vintage Hollywood voice actors, and for those movie and radio buffs who may recognize something maddeningly familiar in the soundtracks of certain Jay Ward cartoons, but who just can't put a name to a voice.



Keith Scott's article originally appeared in the *Frostbite Falls Far-Flung Flier*. (Vol. 10, #3, March, 1996)

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# That Was Then; This is Now—New 'Toons at the Cartoon Network

## An Interview With Linda Simensky

by Gord Wilson

**Gord Wilson:** Cartoon Network is six years old and ANiMATO! is fifteen years old, and the face of animation looks a lot different than it did in either 1983 or 1992. Your viewers and our readers have had a lot to do with that (and they're probably the same set). What changes have you seen and to what would you attribute those changes?

**Linda Simensky:** I think it had a lot to do with the fact that people who grew up watching animation were suddenly in decision making capacities. I've heard that children's TV used to be the starting point for people; whatever you wanted to go into, the starting point was children's TV. People would work in that a year or two until they got promoted into prime time TV.

**GW:** Then they'd say, "thank heaven I'm done with that!"

**LS:** It wasn't 'till the eighties that anyone viewed children's TV as a possible career. That indifference that people had early on meant that the executives changed every year or two. There was no big commitment. They'd look for things that were franchiseable; popular movies from that year would then become series. I think the '90s changed that. Now you have executives in the animation industry who grew up watching animation. People who worked in animation always liked animation, but now you have executives who like it too. A lot of them have definite ideas what they want to do, and a lot want to do funny stuff. They were



Linda Simensky is V.P. of Original Animation at the Cartoon Network

thinking back to Bugs Bunny and Rocky and Bullwinkle, and saying, "I want to do stuff like that." In the early years we all looked to what they used to do in the forties and fifties to inspire us, and now we're in a situation where we can do cartoons like that as well.

**GW:** That's how you approached things when you were at Nickelodeon too, wasn't it?

**LS:** It started in 1989 at Nickelodeon when we began thinking about how we

were going to do cartoons that were going to be different, and I feel we really succeeded. I think we were instrumental in bringing creator animation to the forefront. Now people don't think that creator-driven animation is a weird thing anymore. Not everyone's doing it, but I think there's a lot more respect for it.

**GW:** Yes. Now when you talk to someone at National Film Board of Canada, for instance, they'll say, "you know I really like Joe Murray and Rocko."

**LS:** There weren't a lot of executives at Nick back then, and they really let the animation department do what they wanted to do. They gave us a lot of freedom, and we were sort of quietly operating out of a little office. It was an interesting time. We had so much freedom, and we had no idea if the shows were going to be successful or not. My favorite things in animation have always been the Looney Tunes and independent shorts. I've always been a huge fan of the National Film Board of Canada, and my artistic taste goes their direction because

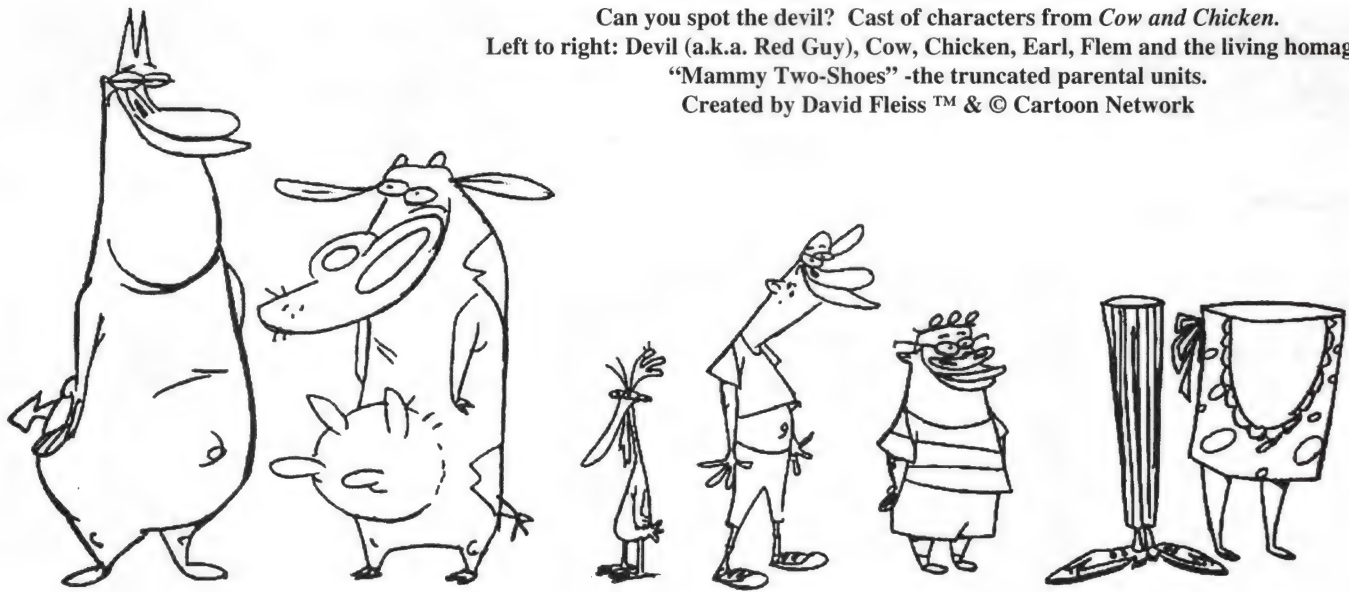
the NFB to me is a mixture of Looney Tunes and European art shorts. It's that combination that I like so much.

**GW:** You've got Marv Newland at one end of the NFB and Caroline Leaf at the other.

**LS:** To be honest, Rocko appealed to me because Joe was very clearly influenced by those two influences, Warner Bros. and independent film. Immediately I connected with it. I thought, I love this design, and the fact that Joe Murray is an independent



Can you spot the devil? Cast of characters from *Cow and Chicken*.  
 Left to right: Devil (a.k.a. Red Guy), Cow, Chicken, Earl, Flem and the living homage to  
 "Mammy Two-Shoes"—the truncated parental units.  
 Created by David Fleiss™ & © Cartoon Network



animator—Joe and I just clicked. I also really liked all the people from the industry who had that rebellious streak. Those are the kind of people I've worked with right along. What I've tried to do at Cartoon Network is combine different independent film looks with different TV looks—different and funny. What we're really trying to do at Cartoon Network now is bring the genre of funny cartoons into the next century. For a while people were influenced by what Tex Avery did in the forties and fifties, but I'm thinking what would he be doing if he were doing cartoons now? He'd be doing "cel phone of tomorrow." He'd be keeping with the times, and that's sort of what we're doing—bringing them more up to date.

**GW:** One of the things that was so appealing to me when Jon Kricfalusi did *Ren and Stimpy* was that he knew and loved that retro Hanna-Barbera sense.

**LS:** But he could take it to the next level, and that's what we're looking for now, people who know and love animation and have their own take on it. That's where Jon fits in. Jon had a very definite vision of what he wanted to do, and it combined elements of things that had been done before with things that had never been done. What Genndy's done with *Dexter's Lab* is to go back to UPA and Hanna-Barbera for help with the look, and that's given the show a timeless feel, but he's made these shorts cinematic. They're not just TV animation anymore, they're filmmaking. It's all about amazing angles and great filmmaking and great color styling. Recently I was looking through a

book of backgrounds for the show, and they're just amazing. He's taken a new look at how to do art and made it theatrical, but to run on TV. To me, that's taking cartoons into the next era.

**GW:** One of the things that's wonderful about *Cow and Chicken* is the voices. I remember Daws Butler saying that one of the things that was nice about the early Hanna-Barbera shorts was the marvelous wordplay between characters.

**LS:** Both Cow and Chicken are voiced by Charlie Adler, and he also has a lot to do with the direction of the characters. David Feiss had thought a lot about the animation, and when Charlie did those voices, I remember David saying that they completely added a new dimension to the show. It's amazing to watch Charlie, because he goes effortlessly from Cow to Chicken, from one voice to the next. The voices are a lot of fun. The thing I like about that show is just how silly it can be. There's no hard and fast reality in that world; it's just whimsical and funny.

**GW:** It has all the elements: a wonderful look, a wonderful sound, and a wonderful unity between the two that makes you say, "this is a cartoon."

**LS:** That's what we're going for. *Cow and Chicken* at the root is about siblings and their relationship: an eleven year old boy who thinks he's cool, and his younger sister who adores him, but drives him crazy. The Cartoon Network twist is that one's a cow and one's a chicken, and an even more interesting twist is that it's surreal. We've

had a lot of fun working on that show.

**GW:** Even the CN promos look good, like the beatnik one, which is almost a mini-video in its own right.

**LS:** That was done by a local company called Primal Screen. They've done a lot of the promos and worked with Michael Ouweleen to bring in the characters. They're all people who love cartoons and are able to recreate that cartoony feel in the little pieces that run between the shows. In a way I'd like to think that by running the classics that we run, we're influencing the next generation of animators in a good way, trying to make available the best stuff in our libraries from the thirties, forties and fifties.

**GW:** Roger Rabbit was our first chance to see toons as diverse as Daffy and Donald Duck or Betty Boop and Minnie Mouse together, but the CN has provided that with the Hanna-Barbera and Warner Bros. libraries running concurrently. This somewhat duplicates the golden age of the funny papers, when strips ran side by side, or the pre-cable network days, when that's just how cartoons ended up. That's exciting both from a licensing and a viewer standpoint.

**LS:** It can be strange when you start combining shows, even for promos. That's something we've always debated: did it look right? It's interesting that characters from the different libraries do fit well together. When Time-Warner and Turner merged, they had a big cardboard cutout of Fred Flintstone and Tom and Jerry and



Bugs Bunny. As a fan, those were all characters that I liked, but it was a funny thought that now they were all in a combined library. It makes me wonder, if you fast forward fifty years, what libraries will have merged. Imagine if someone had told people at Hanna-Barbera that someday their library would be part of the Warners' library.

**GW:** Well I'm pretty excited to see *Underdog*, *Roger Ramjet* and *Rocky and Bullwinkle* added to the lineup. Will we see any other hard-to-see classics coming up?

**LS:** When *Toonheads* started they aired some unusual stuff from the library that you probably wouldn't see elsewhere on CN, but now we have a fulltime producer here working on the show. He's been trying to get student films from some of our creators like G e n n d y Tartakovsky and Craig McCracken, and to show more stuff that's out of the ordinary. That's a show that you'll see develop on the air.

**GW:** Certain connoisseurs, if I may use the term, would like to see say the pristine black and white Popeyes like Bosko Video has put out, or I, for one, would like to see the entire run of *Ruff and Reddy* episodes. There's probably a small specialty audience for these classics, however, and showing them likely works against the general demographics of the station.

**LS:** Now that there's a west coast feed, it allows us to run late at night east coast shows late on the west coast as well, so I think you can expect to see unusual things late at night.

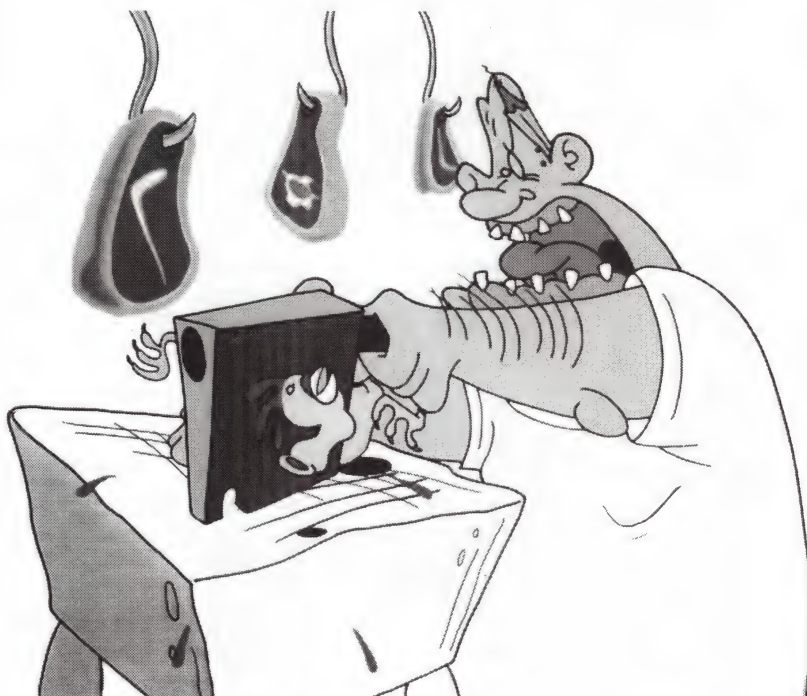
**GW:** So, for instance, now *Alvin and the Chipmunks* is running on CN, but how do we see *The Alvin Show*? Apparently the audience for the original wasn't too big because when Nick ran *The Alvin Show* on Nickelodeon and Weinerville, they camped it up with the little orange Nick logo, which

may make it hard to syndicate.

**LS:** I'm more involved with new show development than with acquisitions so I'm not sure about that.

**GW:** Where did a show like *Two Stupid Dogs* come from?

**LS:** That was made at Hanna-Barbera for Turner, and they aired it on CN when the network started, but it was airing on TBS before that. Some of the people on that team, though, went on to work in the shorts



*Lupo the Butcher*

program, *World Premiere Toons*, and that's essentially our piloting process. We're working on more shorts now, and have about ten in development. We premiered two new shows this season, and one of those shows, *Powerpuff Girls*, came out of that program, as did *Johnny Bravo*, *Dexter's Laboratory*, and *Cow and Chicken*. The thing that made us sure that short should be a show was the really supportive audience who called in and asked that it be made a series. *Powerpuff Girls* has been a really entertaining show to work on. It's about three little girl superheroes, kindergartners, who can save the world, but have to ask to be excused from class.

**GW:** It has sort of a Japanese anime look.

**LS:** Yes. It's an interesting look, sort of a combination of seventies Japanese animation: a little bit of *Astro Boy*, a little bit of *Hello Kitty*, but it's still very unique looking.

**GW:** The little trinity of crime fighters. Let's talk about your other new show, *Ed, Edd 'n' Eddy*.

**LS:** Well it's kind of ironic that we'd be working on two shows simultaneously where one's about three girls and one's about three boys. We didn't plan to do that, but they're probably the two most different shows in the world. *Powerpuff Girls* has elements of action/adventure, mixed with humor. It's more about good versus evil.

*Ed, Edd 'n' Eddy* is more about boy versus puberty. It's about three boys growing up on the same street, who all have the same name and are all best friends. I connected to it immediately for a funny reason; when I was growing up I had two friends named Linda, and I used to think we were just friends because we were all named Linda. When I saw the coversheet it made me laugh, but it turned out to be a very funny, personal take on boys on the edge of adolescence.

**GW:** It seems like kind of a departure for Danny Antonucci, who's known for things like *Lupo the Butcher* and *The Brothers Grunt*.

**LS:** It's a departure in some ways from the really extreme kind of animation Danny's known for, but the thing people don't realize about Danny is that he really has a great sense of character, and a really good eye for the quirks in character. He's created some really great characters who are easy to understand and connect with. He's managed to do something I haven't seen a lot of people able to do, and that is to really emphasize the cartoon aspects of the show. He's making a cartoon, not a sitcom. There's a lot of cartoony action that adds a whole different dimension to it. A lot of people now are really making sitcoms which just happen to be animated. Danny's doing something you can't do in a sitcom, something that has to be animated. The characters are very funny, but you look at



them and say, I know these people; I grew up with them. I've never worked on a show that the people from standards and practices, who oversee the cartoons, so thoroughly approved of; they find it absolutely entertaining.

**GW:** *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* was such a wonderful surprise, and to my mind, *Cartoon Planet* is even better. Where'd you ever get a wonderful property like that?

**LS:** The funny thing about that show is that the property was already in the library that we owned. Mike Lazzo, who is my boss, and Andy Merrill, who's Brak, and Khaki Jones, who works with me now, were the brains behind that show. Andy had the title, Mike thought up the talk show, and the three of them figured out, through editing, how to do *Space Ghost*. That's probably the best example of reusing animation to do something interesting. Some people have suggested taking old Hanna Barbera cartoons and revoicing them to make sarcastic comments, but I think that's almost too predictable. Something like *Space Ghost* though, you could even call postmodern—if you could figure out what "postmodern" meant. It's an amazing and smart use of old animation.

**GW:** You've got the Alex Toth stylings and the new nineties dialogue—Zorak is so fantastic.

**LS:** The voice of Zorak is Clay Croker. He also does the incidental animation for the show.

**GW:** If we like what Ted Turner did with the Cartoon Network, do we have reason to fear what Time-Warner will do with it?

**LS:** They seem to be leaving it alone. The merger has actually been good, because it's given us access to a lot of good shows, for instance *Freakazoid*. That's a really funny show, but it benefits the show now

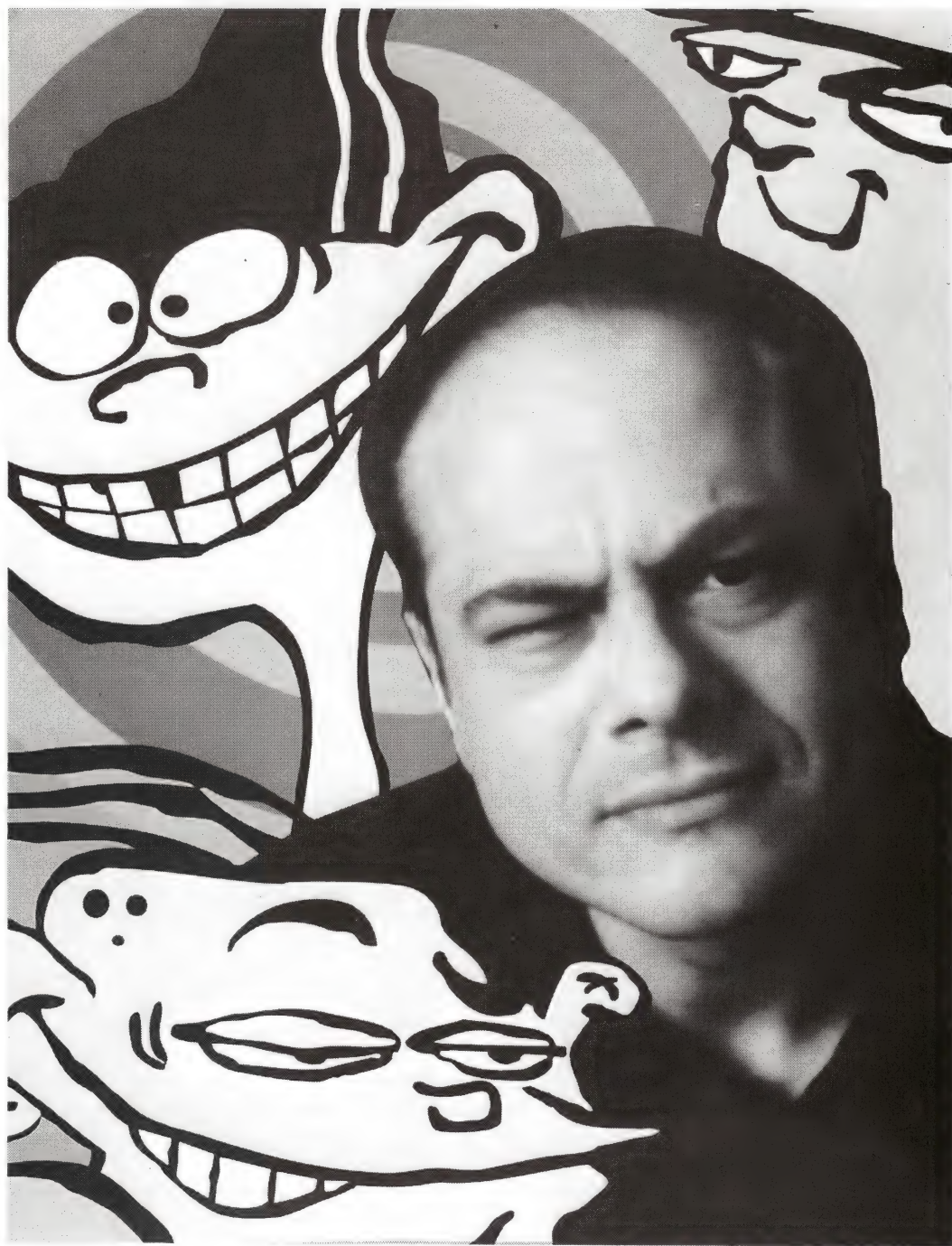
running it on weekends instead of weekly. I love shows like *Pinky and the Brain* and hope we can eventually run them.

**GW:** As recently as last year, a critic wrote that Hollywood hates cartoons. Can you assure us that Georgia doesn't hate cartoons?

**LS:** Georgia doesn't hate cartoons, and I think that the world at large loves cartoons. It's true that if you put a lot of Hollywood people in one room, no one would want to talk to the animation people; they wouldn't

be the most popular people at the party. The animated short award at the Oscars is usually the point where people excuse themselves to use the restrooms. In the world at large it's a pretty big deal, but in Hollywood it's not. But that's fine, because as animation has gotten bigger, it's caused some people who aren't that interested in it to enter the animation industry because it's "hot," and I'd just as soon have those people stick to live action.

**GW:** It's about time there was some TV for the world at large.



Danny Antonucci with Ed, Edd 'n' Eddy





**Big Bag:** Chelli, Lyle, Bag, Argyle and Sofie

**LS:** The big step ahead for Cartoon Network is reminding adults, teenage girls—really everybody—that it's OK to watch cartoons. I think *The Simpsons* and *King of the Hill* have done that to some degree—made people comfortable with watching animation. But a lot of kids feel that when they hit their teen years they outgrow kids programs or animation, which they think of as the same thing. I recently sat next to someone on a plane who said, "yeah, sometimes I watch cartoons, but my wife thinks I'm crazy." Why? He was talking about Bugs Bunny! But that's the impression people have—that it's only for kids—so I think the goal is to spread the word that it's still OK.

**GW:** I think Betty Cohen commented on baby boomer parents being able to watch Bugs Bunny with their kids. Doesn't that take us back to the original family appeal of *The Huckleberry Hound Show*?

**LS:** I think that's why CN is so successful, because it's programming for the whole family.

**GW:** I think you also have that intermediate age group—what shall we call it? Gen X?

**LS:** We tend to watch the stuff we grew up with. Our new shows are our highest ranking shows, and then next come things like Bugs Bunny, Tom and Jerry and *The Flintstones*. People who grew up with them are watching them, and watching them in prime time with their families. It works all around.

**GW:** Thank you for giving people good shows to grow up with so they don't have to have associations of say, *The Smurfs*.

**LS:** In a way I envy kids today because they have so many choices; there's so much good animation out there. It's a lot more accepted than it was through the late seventies and the eighties and even the early nineties. I think we have *The Simpsons* to thank for that. That's probably been the single most important show in animation since the sixties.

**GW:** Demographically CN splits the day up with *Big Bag* for pre-schoolers, *Toonami* for teens, Batman moving into an adult audience. This is different than twenty-four hours of undifferentiated cartoons.

**LS:** Yes it is. *Batman* is more for a prime time audience, which is a combination of adults and kids. Our breakdown is pretty much one-third adults, two-thirds kids. We acknowledge that different people are watching at different times. You can have a lot of shows that are not age-specific, but then there are shows that are age-specific. Viewing blocks are a fundamental of programming. So we try to run those shows in blocks that are closer to the audience that would be watching.

**GW:** I don't think people have a sense of the diversity on the Cartoon Network.

**LS:** You're right, but even since I've been here, we've doubled the number of viewers; now we're in nearly fifty million homes.

Because we're growing and CN is perceived as such a hot network, that perception is probably going to change over the years. I'm kind of enjoying the fact that we're not so much part of the mainstream because it allows me to experiment more. I can try things out and there's not an enormous amount of pressure to make every short a hit. Some things we do are more interesting and experimental than they are sure hits. The nature of the network being under the radar, as it were, has been helpful to me. But it's getting a lot of press now and more people are requesting it. That's how cable stations get into houses—by request.

**GW:** I think the Cartoon Network could merchandise a little more; I'd like to get a Dexter notebook or a Space Ghost school folder.

**LS:** I agree. People tend to forget that this is a very young network, and machines that are in place and running at other networks aren't quite up to speed here yet. Our new connection with Warner Bros. may have some effect on that.

**GW:** I loved the "animate your world" shorts. Weren't those connected with Cable in the Classroom?

**LS:** Those were done early on as one of those outreach sort of things showing how animation and creativity were connected. A couple of people here in the on-air promos department developed that: Meredith Fierman was the senior writer and producer and Bea Murphy the design director. They worked on it together with Curious Pictures in San Francisco. If we were looking for a way to be socially responsible, that would be the way. It was motivational more than anything.

**GW:** Does the Cartoon Network have to develop shows for the big education push that Congress was trying to put through?

**LS:** Since we're cable, we're not affected by that. *Big Bag* is our educational show. I think at a certain point educational TV becomes a big question mark. The big question now in the industry is whether TV that teaches social lessons is educational or simply socially responsible.

**GW:** It should all be socially responsible, but since it's not I suppose they have to do that. I think it was Joe Barbera who said he was in favor of cartoons that were mindlessly funny instead of mindlessly preachy.



**LS:** I absolutely agree with that. Kids are just like adults. They spend all day learning and cartoons are simply their chance to relax. Is this something that we're going to be proud of someday? Or is it something we're going to look at and say, "gee, we sure were preachy."?

**GW:** And the Martians will say, "gee those people were stupid."

**LS:** If every sitcom had to have a big lesson in it, people would start turning it off. No one's saying all children's books or all comic strips have to have a lesson in them. I think they've picked on children's TV a little too much. The fact that cable doesn't have to comply with the educational requirements I think just makes it that much harder for the networks, because they've got this extra challenge now.

**GW:** We noted that the wonderful *Cats Don't Dance* got almost no advance publicity. The CN would've seemed a natural home for it. Do you have any plans for movies or feature-length animation in the future?

**LS:** *Cats Don't Dance* was great. Last summer we launched the Cartoon Network Theater as a place to air movies like *Balto*, *An American Tail*, *The Jetsons Meet the Flintstones* and *The Land Before Time*.

**GW:** What are your goals at the Cartoon Network?

**LS:** What I'm trying to do is attract a certain kind of artist. I'm looking for people who want to make cartoons, not deals. I'm looking for people who have a vision they want to put on the air, who have a vision for cartoons, and really love cartoons. The Cartoon Network isn't a machine, and we can't offer people everything other people can. What we can offer is a lot of freedom and a chance to see a vision through. I'm a big fan of animation, and I'm very lucky because I've been put in a position where I can pick out my favorite animators, as I've done with Danny Antonucci and a lot of other people, and say, "I really like your stuff. I think this is a great idea and I'm really going to let you do what you want with it."

The Cartoon Network is really open to that as long as we don't have people hacking each other to death. Obviously we're not going for violent things, but we have a lot of freedom. The kind of thing we're doing is about character-driven, funny cartoons. Our audience is



Ed, Edd 'n' Eddy

kids and adults and it's pretty diverse, so we're just going for that general, cartoon-loving audience. If there's one thing our audience and creators have in common, it's that they love cartoons. It's a lot of people making cartoons and having a lot of fun. I'm excited because I'm able to offer them this kind of freedom. That's our way of being experimental. I just want everyone working on the shows to be having a lot of fun. That's important for me. I'm having fun. It's a pretty exciting time. We've got a lot in production and there's a lot that's

going to be happening over the next couple years. All the departments are working together to think out the future of the network, and we have some pretty special people down here. Michael Ouweleen and his department have a big vision for the look of the network, and we'll be unveiling that in the future. I think it underscores our feeling about cartoons, which is that we really love them.



Sofie from Cartoon Network's *Big Bag*



# POWERPUFF GIRLS

*McCracken and Tartakovsky*

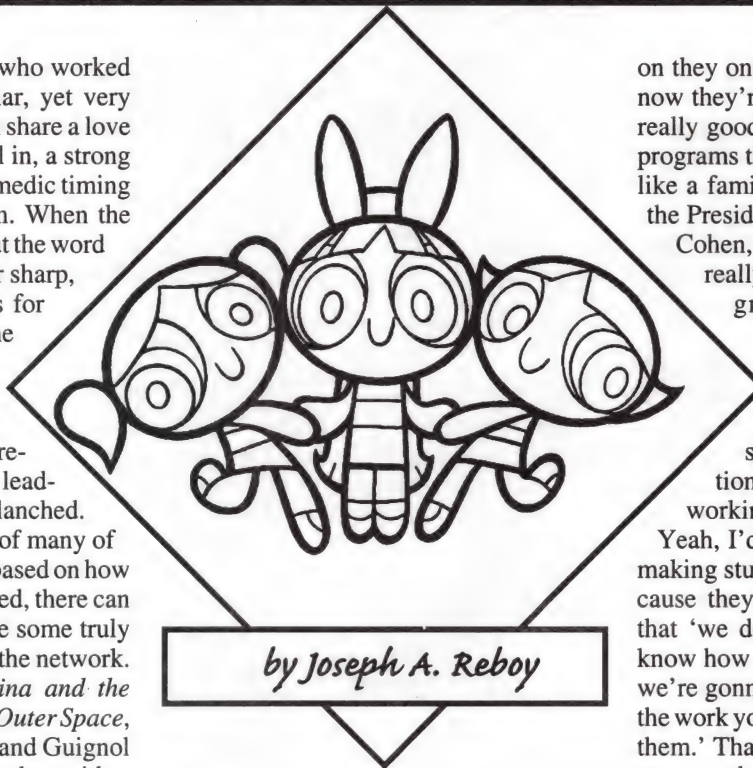
This is a tale of two men who worked together to create very similar, yet very different cartoons. These men share a love of the medium that they excel in, a strong visual style, and a sense of comedic timing that is very rare in animation. When the fledgling Cartoon Network put the word out that they were looking for sharp, new talent to create cartoons for them, both men were up to the challenge. When those toons were greenlighted to go to series, both men worked together. And when the roles reversed and they had to change leadership positions, neither side blanched.

While the relative success of many of the World Premiere Toons is based on how your sense of comedy is defined, there can be no question that there were some truly impressive works created for the network. Early standouts included *Mina and the Count* and *The Chicken From Outer Space*, each focusing on the more Grand Guignol aspects of lurid melodrama... but with a strong visual style and a love of undercutting the seriousness with grandly simple and charming bits of comedy. And then making sure the viewer is aware that the situations presented were indeed every bit as disturbing as they were presented in the first place (grandpa's body is taken over, transformed, and finally vaporized by the family hounddog in *Chicken!*).

But for premises with, as old Hollywood would say, LEGS, the Cartoon Network could find no finer pilots for new series than in Genndy Tartakovsky's *Dexter's Laboratory* and Craig McCracken's *Powerpuff Girls*. With highly stylized looks and very TV-oriented backdrops, these shorts stood out like fine thoroughbreds.

After testing the two shorts and ordering up sequels which played equally as well, Cartoon Network placed their first order for a new series... *Dexter's Laboratory*.

While still highly confident of the potential demonstrated by the *Powerpuff Girls*, the Network wanted to step into the brutal ice-flow encrusted waters of fresh



programming with the slightly more polished of the two shorts.

So why did *Dexter's Laboratory* go to series before *Powerpuff Girls* did? Genndy explains, "I think it got a better response right off the bat. I think Powerpuff was not as mainstream as Dexter at the time. Cartoon Network was really timid, they did like *Powerpuff Girls* but they weren't as sure, but they needed Dexter because the character started to grow on you right away from the first two shorts, so they decided to go with my show first. We thought they were going to give him (Craig McCracken) the show earlier, but since he was working on Dexter they decided 'well, we'll just let him finish, and we'll go to *Powerpuff Girls* right after."

Tartakovsky and McCracken were teamed up to produce the new series. Both men speak quite happily of the experience (not surprising as Dexter has just been nominated/awarded for an Emmy!). They both see themselves with Cartoon Network for some time to come, "I feel really close to them. When the first Dexter came

on they only had 12 million viewers, and now they're up to 55 million. So, it feels really good to be one of the first original programs that they ran, and so it's kind of like a family feeling. We're friends with the President of Cartoon Network, Betty Cohen, and with Mike Lazzo, we're really close and we do have that great relationship together.

There's no coldness at all. It doesn't feel like a corporate environment at all."

Craig McCracken also speaks highly of the organization when asked if he'd like to keep working with the Cartoon Network, "Yeah, I'd love to if they'd still have us making stuff. It's a great environment because they basically take the standpoint that 'we don't make cartoons, we don't

know how to make cartoons, you do, and we're gonna let you do it because we like the work you do, so just go ahead and make them.' That's the best kind of philosophy you can have. It's great for us because they've given us a lot of freedom."

While the title of Producer means many things to many people, it meant Genndy would be overseeing as many different departments as possible, striving to give a cohesive look and feel to the episodes. He's since directed several episodes and put his personal touch in other aspects of the episodes he did not direct, "My self and four other people came up with all the stories. I ran the whole production, all the day by day and all the post-production, the pre-production, and all that stuff."

Running the whole production naturally entailed creating a universe and a set of characters, Genndy explains, "As far as developing all the other characters all the storyboard people that worked on the show brought them to life naturally. We kind of got lucky with the characters that we had that they kind of began to grow by themselves... they didn't really need a lot of development. We kind of naturally knew who the characters were. They started growing and getting more dimensional by themselves. My goal when I first started was to

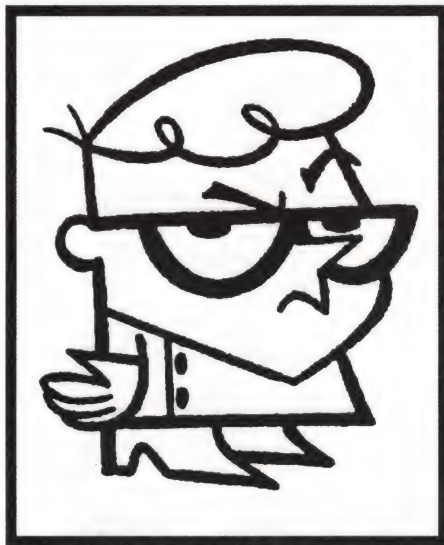


# DEXTER'S LABORATORY

*Tartakovsky and McCracken*

make some characters where people didn't have to think about 'oh, I'm watching an animated cartoon,' they would think about 'Oh, I'm watching Dexter and DeeDee interact.' Also my goal was to make energetic cartoons where you're left with a feeling of 'what else is on after this'. These have a little weight after you watch them. You don't just forget about them. Some of those episodes we definitely did achieve it, where you are left with a feeling afterward. As far as the characters growing, they really did become alive for me. That's probably one of the more successful things that I am happy with about Dexter, the characters really came together... Mom, Dad, Dexter, DeeDee, all of them."

The genesis of the main characters is a series of unrelated elements. Where some cartoonists might draw from real-life and parody a person they know or knew, Genndy derived his two main protagonists from many sources, "I always felt that DeeDee was more like me in a way... a hidden stupidity I guess... and an excitedness that she always had. The situation was like me and my brother... he had all these intricate toys that he played with and he really wouldn't let me play with them. But that's really stretching it. The show originated as I just drew this girl and I came up with this head shape accidentally. I decided hey, she's kind of neat, and I liked her. I wanted to do a girl dancing for an animation assignment. I needed somebody to interact with her, who is the opposite of her, who was kind of short and was going to be a scientist. And then he could have his own lab in the bedroom, and



things just started to take off." There are no real clear takes on anybody in his life.

While many shows rely on guest voice work, usually of a high-profile nature, *Dexter's Laboratory* only occasionally turned to guest voices. One of the more recent episodes featured '70s songmeister Paul Williams walking in and practically taking over the episode (it's a mark of the quality of the show that Genndy did not insist that Dexter be Front and Center in every episode!!!) in *Just an Old Fashioned Lab Song*. "One of the storyboard guys, Dave Smith," offered Genndy, "he's a huge, huge Paul Williams fan, so he wanted to do an episode about Dexter learning about the piano, and he wanted to make the piano teacher Paul Williams, so we were like... 'okay'. Actually, Dave wrote the song for Paul Williams to sing, and actually he does

do Cartoon voices here and there. And it all kind of came together real easy, and he liked the song a lot so he sang it. And Dave's one of the few people who works here who has some celebrities that he likes, and so we also brought in Dom DeLuise. I liked Dom also, so we had him in a couple of other shows."

The goal for the show to use pop-culture icons not necessarily readily identifiable to the average twelve year old is mostly a matter of doing what's entertaining, rather than a driving need to be referential to any particular audience. "Whenever we do stuff like that it's just part of the joke, just a level. In *A Beard to Be Feared*, with Action Hank, we wanted to do an A-Team type guy who busts in and does all that stuff. We use things that we like a lot and put them in the show, but with a twist on them so other people can pick up on it. We also did an episode with Dynamutt and Blue Falcon because it was my favorite show when I was a kid, and so we wanted to do the characters the way I remember them. There is a lot of that stuff around (in the show) it's kind of obvious, but if the kids don't get it they still like the show on a different level."

On yet another level of the show was the occasional middle-segment introduced sporadically through the first season, *Dial M For Monkey*, featuring a normal chimpanzee who, when called upon by his lovely secret agent girlfriend agent Honeydew, becomes a super-powered monkey known as... Monkey. Officially appearing in eight shorts, he has made subtle appearances in other Dexter's episodes, most notably in the landmark *Speed Racer* parody. Mon-



The Secret Lab



key was not the success Genndy had hoped for, nor was he a failure. His shenanigans inspired elements that would intertwine inexorably with *Dexter's Laboratory* and introduce the subsequent series of shorts, the *Justice Friends*, a good-hearted mixture of the DC Comics' *Justice League of America*, Marvel Comics' *Avengers*, and Must-See TV's *Friends*. "At the time we were doing *Monkey* it was hard to do him because we were still trying to develop Dexter and have a new character in the middle. We liked him, each one of the eight episodes is really good. We were really happy with them. But then, to pursue *Monkey* further he needed more development

never fulfilled my true vision. I definitely want to try some more (*Justice Friends*) shorts."

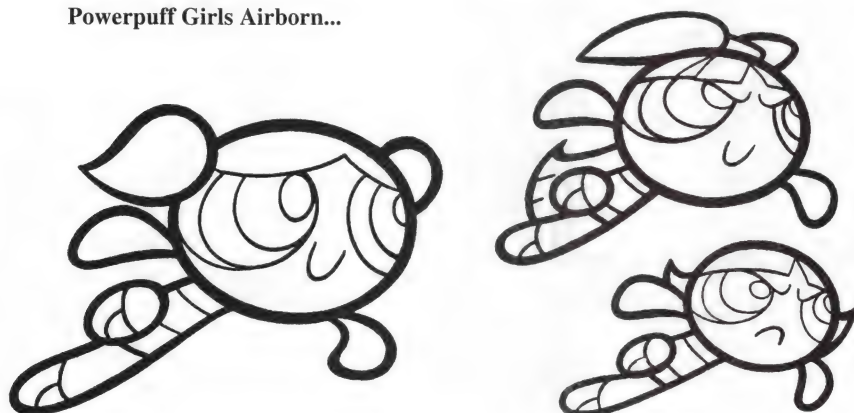
The format of two main series shorts and a third, semi-related short arose from a mutual agreement between the animators and Cartoon Network. That formula worked well enough with Dexter that it was tried again to interesting effect on *Cow and Chicken* (but not *Johnny Bravo*). With *Powerpuff Girls* there will be just two eleven minute shorts, there is no second sub-series. Craig feels the seven minute limit is too limiting, "there's hardly any time to really do any good business or really do any dramatic stuff. If you try

ing out real strong. Craig did his short before I did mine, and we worked on each other's. It's almost better that we worked together on Dexter's because now we're all better filmmakers and we're a lot smarter about everything, so now his show is coming out tighter and better right from the start. Sometimes on Dexter I felt we were a little choppy here and there. It's hard to do a show. Yet, for him there's a lot more focus in it. We know what kind of stories work. We know how to tell a joke better, and how to do action better. So he definitely benefited from all this time that he did my show while he was waiting to do his."

Traditionally animation is a compartmentalized process with very little personal vision and very little interaction between the different departments. Also inherent in the system is Broadcast Standards and Practices, the bane of TV production everywhere. It is this system which gave the world 1970s TV animation in all it's limited, sanitized and soulless glitz. Fond as we may be of the '70s, they are a decade best looked back on, and not necessarily repeated.

The Cartoon Network Standards and Practices was not a serious concern for Genndy and Craig. Genndy explains, "The production has been absolutely great to work with, except for the Standards issues where they have to be protective, and we thought it was really silly. For instance, we couldn't do an episode about lice. There are some mandates we had to follow. As far as creatively they really just let us do the show we wanted to do, because that's the show they want too. Luckily my vision for

Powerpuff Girls Airborn...



because he was a little bit more simple character. As Dexter was progressing we needed to still pay attention to him and I couldn't pay attention to *Monkey* that much. The Cartoon Network and Hanna-Barbera weren't sure about him because they didn't know how to get responses on the middle show, so they asked us to do more Dexters and not any more Monkeys unless we had some really good ideas. But I was talking to Mike Lazzo last week and he was saying how everybody still loves *Monkey* and maybe there's a future for him."

The *Justice Friends* then sprang out of *Monkey* (from the *Monkey* episode *Rasslor*), "Myself and Paul Ruddish, who designed all the characters and came up with them, and we came up with the idea that we don't just do a straight forward action show, but we did them as roommates and they have to deal with each other's powers and so forth. So we kind of grooved on it, and again, it's the situation where we started to do it and then Dexter took over again and we couldn't really pay as much attention as we could. It always felt to me that *Justice Friends* more than *Monkey* felt a little short, like it could have been really good. There were some episodes that were better than others, but it

watch a seven minute action show you really feel kind of shortchanged. So, we asked if them if it was okay for us to do two eleven minute shorts per show."

Sprinkled within the series, however, will be the occasional epic-length twenty two minute stories, "we did one storyboard that was eleven minutes and we got a call from Cartoon Network saying 'we like this idea so much, do you guys want to make it a twenty two minute episode?' and we said 'Yeah! We'd love to'. We have already done two episodes that had been expanded because the idea really lent itself. The Cartoon Network was happy to do it. Sometimes it's a story that just needs to be told in that time. We were really surprised they let us do it, but they saw a potential and said go with it."

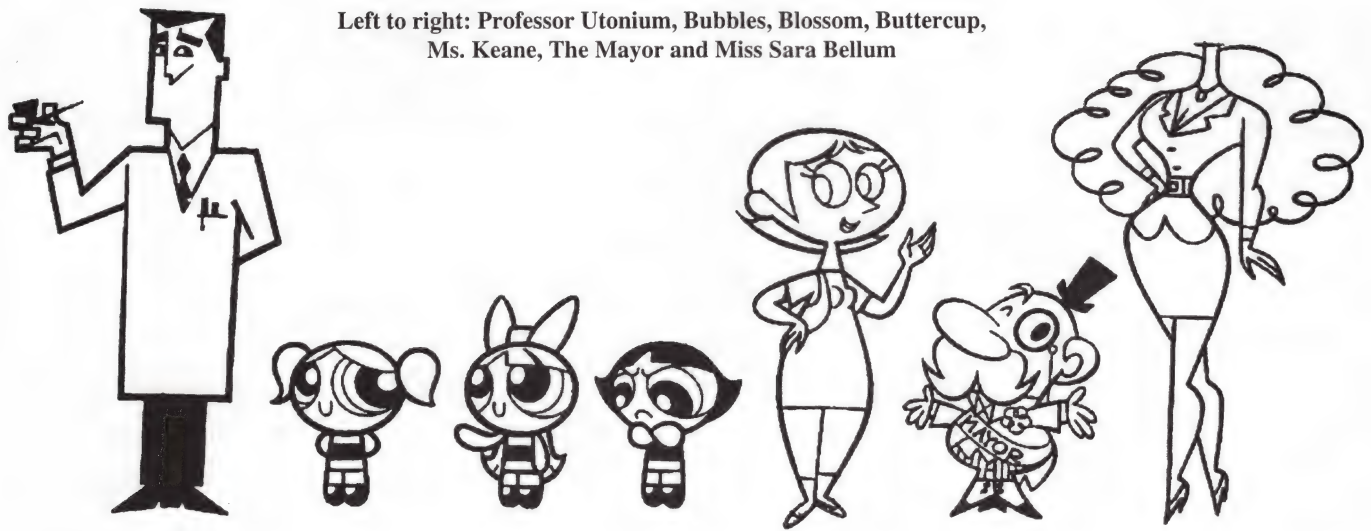
*Powerpuff Girls*, which is already into it's second season of episodes in production, is also expected to be a large hit for the Cartoon Network. Craig McCracken, who's initial shorts for World Premiere Toons stood out so nicely, and who went on to support Genndy Tartakovsky in *Dexter's Laboratory*, then moved up to bat and produce the new series with Genndy taking a more supporting role. Genndy explains the benefit to this... "The shows are com-



Dee Dee



Left to right: Professor Utonium, Bubbles, Blossom, Buttercup, Ms. Keane, The Mayor and Miss Sara Bellum



the show was also a vision they were really happy with, so it was a very happy marriage.”

Craig McCracken is enthusiastic about how the network has backed him up on *Powerpuff Girls*, “there’s always the usual Standards and Practices what you can and cannot do, but actually the Cartoon Network is pretty lenient compared to other studios. There was just a little bit of B.S. & P. getting used to the idea that yeah, we forgot, this is an action show, there are bad guys, there are people doing evil things, there will be fight scenes. They kind of had to take that into consideration. A lot of times B. S. & P. will have a concern about a particular scene and Cartoon Network will go ‘we’re not worried about it, we think it’s great, let ‘em do it’, and so they’ve been really supportive though out this whole thing.”

The series is actually the culmination of several years of piecing together by McCracken, “I’d come up with it in 1991 when I was a student at CalArts and just over the years as I learned more about animation, and working on *Dexter’s* I’ve learned a lot more about making cartoons and what it is that makes them good, or what it is that we like, so the show’s just kind of evolved over the years because I’ve had the idea for so long. The characters are real. The girls aren’t just two-dimensional superheroes who beat up the bad guys, they are living breathing characters and you really like their personalities. That’s what I really like most, the universe we’ve built.”

Creating a much more visually bold and energetic world than in the original shorts, which Genndy credits to art director Craig Kellman, “...who’s one of the greatest designers in the industry right now”, the show will create a much more stylized universe with which to support its charac-

ters. Other things to look forward to in the new series will be the chance to explore the girl’s character weaknesses and strengths, petty jealousies, and so forth.

“The length of the eleven minute cartoon is a big difference from seven minutes,” Craig mentions, “I don’t want to say the stories are more detailed but in the two original shorts the storyline was kind of motivated just by strange ideas. In the series we’re trying to motivate the ideas based on the girls and what they would do as kids. We deal with an episode where the girls are afraid of the dark, and the villain for that piece is the Bogeyman. Or we have a show where a villain wants to take over the world with insects, and the girls are afraid of bugs! So we try to somehow motivate the stories based on little kids’ quirks... things the girls can personally relate to as opposed to just some ranting villain doing something to take over the world. We try to keep their personalities and who they are as characters driving the show. That’s the big difference, but the energy’s still there and it should be exciting.”

Did Craig research the foibles and fears of childhood in preparation for his lofty goals? “We’ve never done any hands-on research. A lot of it is just sitting down and trying to remember what it was like when we were kids. The best thing to come up with is like, one thing... being afraid of the dark! Simple, basic things can really grow into a whole idea. You don’t really need any complicated things... it’s the little ideas to branch off of.”

Craig expounds further, “I think it’s going really well, establishing a lot of strong characters. The show has a lot of energy and action. Basically the philosophy on *Dexter* and *Powerpuff Girls* is to make the core characters interesting and

appealing characters and the show basically writes itself because that’s why you’re watching it... you’re watching the different personalities. That’s kind of the way we’re approaching *Powerpuff Girls*. Yeah, it is a super-hero show and it’s an action show but the thing that makes it stand out from the other ones is these particular girls and that’s why we like watching them.”

Craig is quick to point out that going to series means deeper, richer textures to work in, “The original shorts were about seven minutes long and we never really dealt with the girl’s origins, their home base, their home live, school live them as characters and what they do during the day, but now that we’ve gone to series with the standard eleven minute shows we’ve set up the origin of how the girls got their powers, who they live with and how they were created. They were created by this genetic engineer who built them out of sugar and spice and everything nice, and he added chemical “X” which kind of set them off. We deal with that, we deal with them being in school, and there’s the mayor who always calls them.”

The new series will not be episodic, however it can be expected to reference itself, “there are a few episodes where if a villain has done something in a certain episode we might refer back to it in a later one. There’s a little more of that because they are in a real universe where they will have repeating villains and there’s some continuity in the stories. Most every episode will work on it’s own.”

The rogue’s gallery will expand past the previously seen *Fuzzy Lumpkins* (from the original short *Meat Fuzzy Lumpkins*) and *The Amoeba Brothers* to include a primary villain... “The main one villain is basically the arch villain named Mojo Jojo, and he’s this evil monkey/mad scientist... a classic



arch-villain type whose always out to give the girls grief and to destroy the world. He's basically a superintelligent monkey who hates the Human Race because on the evolutionary scale he's like a step below physically, but mentally he's three or four hundred steps above the human race. So, he just kind of hates people." Consider him an angrier, more classic villain to *Dial M For Monkey's* Primator, the Ape with the Charlton Heston voice and the urge to conquer humans.

While *Dexter's Laboratory* coexisted in a universe with *Dynamutt*, as of yet no previously existing cartoon character appears to have entered the *Powerpuff* realm, "We haven't found a show that really fit within our universe, which we could use. The thing with *Dynamutt* is it happened to be a show that Genndy grew up loving, and it was like, 'wait, robot dog, Hanna-Barbera world, kid who does robots... ', it was a perfect idea and was a natural transition into Dexter's world. If we could find something which fit as easily into the *Powerpuff* world yeah we'd be more than willing to do it."

The Cartoon Network's response so far has been positive, "They're really excited about it. They're really happy with what we've been giving them. From what they've told me they couldn't be happier. We sent them a work print a couple weeks ago and they recently called back and said they knew it was going to be good but they weren't expecting it to be that good. They're pretty confident with us as a crew because they're really happy with the work we did on *Dexter's* and they kind of knew if we did a show it would be one that they would be happy with."



Fuzzy Lumpkins "meats" his match

Music played a large part in the success of *Dexter's Laboratory* (hence the release of a musical CD!!!) and *Powerpuff Girls* is expected to take advantage of it as well, "We've actually done one song already for

the show, but animation and filmmaking is just a musical art form anyway, it's all based on rhythm and timing and movement so music is just there to support it in the long run. Music is going to be a key part

of it because its an action show and when you see action sequences and fighting sequences and saving the day sequences you want to feel that energy! Music is a giant part of the show. I hope to do more... the stuff we did on *Dexter's* I'm really happy with."

Merchandising, which in the past has literally driven the direction of many a cartoon is not a key concern for Craig, "Most of the merchandising stuff is kind of out of my hands. It really depends on what we do with the show. With *Dexter* we never intended to do all these songs and do all this music stuff. We did the whole run of episodes and we said 'look, we've got all this stuff, why don't we do something with it.'. So if that happens with *Powerpuff Girls* we'd be more than happy to do CDs or so forth, but it kind of all depends on what happens



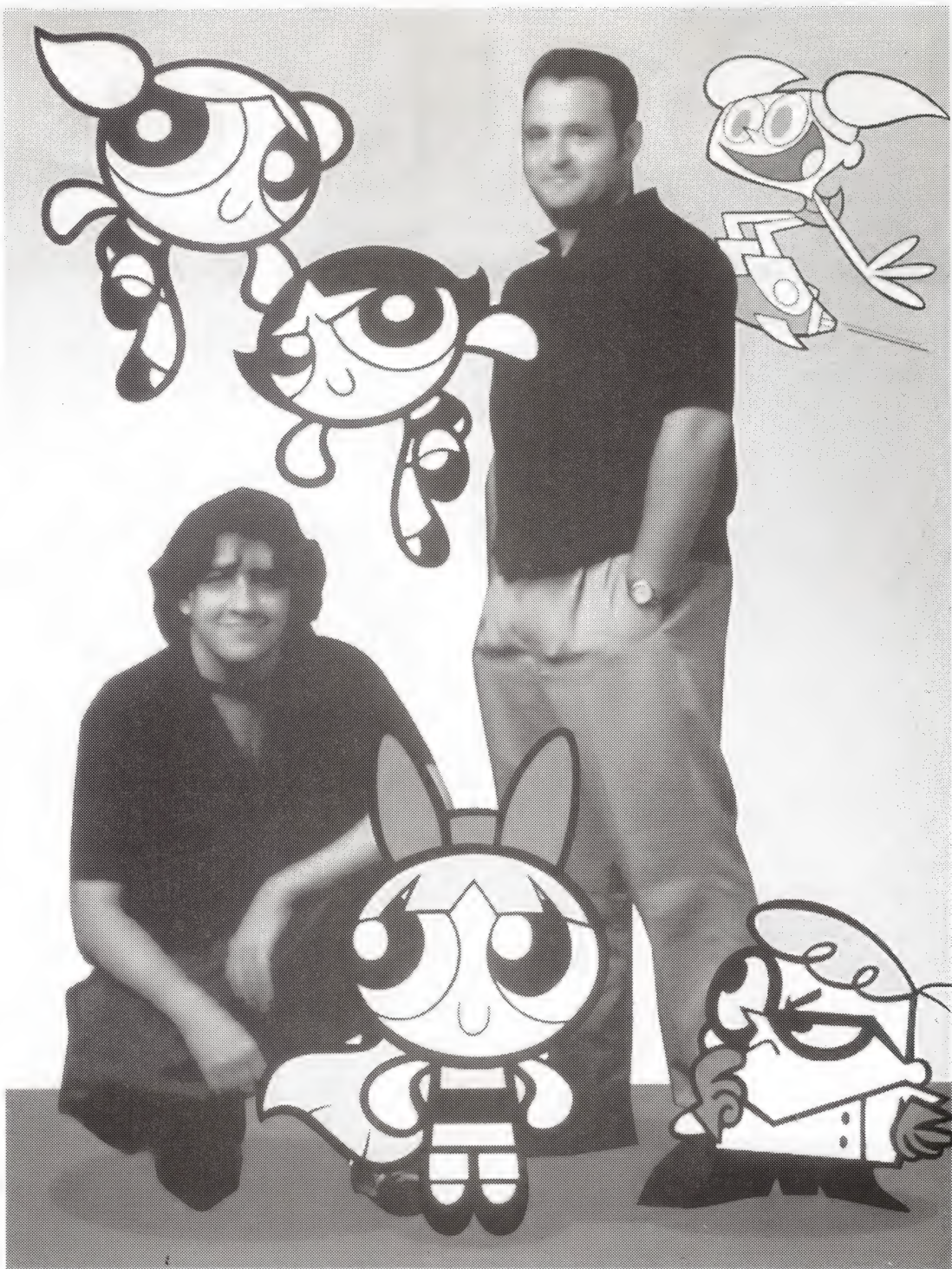
Dee Dee and Dexter enjoying the moment



in the actual series. The marketing department handles that side, deciding how and when. We really haven't started merchandising Dexter's yet."

The series starts in November of this year, which may seem strange as most programming gears up for a September start date, but Craig is not concerned that he's being dumped in the middle of a schedule, "Cartoon Network told us that in November, around Thanksgiving, kids are home and they get really high numbers at that point.". He feels the philosophy behind the late start date is to give it a very strong push and make it as big as possible.

With *Dexter's Laboratory* being stripped to five nights a week, and *Powerpuff Girls* looming at the edge of the curtain ready to trample all comers, the Cartoon Network seems to have solidified a long ignored, yet vital cartoon genre. No satiric *Homer Simpsons*, no caustic *South Parks*, neither be there a cynical claymation paeon to death in these cartoons. This is your childhood... with all the energy, pathos, outsized fear, and fearless confidence that super-empowered and diminutive children can bring to it. You go, Girls!



Craig McCracken and Genndy Tartakovsky with Dee Dee, Dexter, Blossom, Buttercup and Bubbles

The Animation World Network

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# Cool McCool

The Sixties Spy Craze Revisited  
A Top-Secret Document Filed by David "The Mole" Krell

In *Animato!* #34 (Spring 1996), I explored the 1960s spy craze through the several animation offerings of the era, e.g., *Tom of T.H.U.M.B.*, *The Man Called Flintstone*, *Secret Squirrel*, in my article *Sixties Spy Craze: Animation is the Sincerest Form of Flattery*.

After several top-secret, eyes only, highly classified meetings with *Animato!* agents, I decided to further investigate another spy-toon mentioned in *Sixties Spy Craze*.

*Cool McCool* (First Aired: NBC, September 10, 1966) featured an unlikely hero in the title role, an inept yet debonair spy with an alliterative, hip-sounding name and a familial penchant for battling bad guys. I first learned of the *Cool McCool* character about three years ago. At the time, I was working as an attorney at a small television distribution/production company which hired a consultant to identify potential acquisition opportunities in order to assist in strategic planning, aiding the mandate to strengthen the library, broaden the scope of ownership of characters protected by copyright and trademark and stimulate new production of same, thereby maximizing awareness of the company and its other properties, thus enhancing and eventually maximizing profits. (Once a lawyer, always a lawyer. In plain language, the company wanted to expand.)

Bob Kane associated with Al Brodax for this contribution to the spy genre. Kane and Brodax previously presented programs in animated form, each basing a show on a well-known popular culture phenomenon.

In 1960, Kane's syndicated *Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse* drew direct and satirical parallels to the artist's Batman and Robin characters created some two decades prior. For example, the Dynamic Duo's domain of Gotham City became Empire City; Gotham is a pseudonym for New York City while Empire City recalls the Empire State nickname of New York state.

*Courageous Cat* consisted of 100 five-minute cartoons and highlighted an element familiar to another famous cartoon cat which also made a syndication debut in 1960. *Courageous Cat*'s Catgun could be transformed into any one of countless objects needed for the task at hand, comparable to Felix the Cat's magic bag of tricks.

By virtue of his position at King Features, Brodax enjoyed the unique opportunity to contribute to Beatlemania. Hal Erickson explains in his 1995 book *Television Cartoon Shows: An Illustrated Encyclopedia, 1949 through 1993*.

"Al Brodax, the head of King Features

Syndicate's television division who'd already brought such King Features newspaper properties as Popeye and Beetle Bailey to the screen, was elected by ABC to develop an animated series based on *The Beatles* [First Aired: ABC, September 25, 1965]. Brodax set to work, enlisting the corps of artisans from the British-based TVC studios -- which would later produce the influential Beatles animated feature *Yellow Submarine* (1968), directed by TVC head George Dunning -- and the staff of Australia's Astransa company."

Cool McCool displayed a contemporary feel. Importantly, Cool McCool looked like a spy, complete with trenchcoat and very similar to the *Inspector Gadget* character which debuted in 1983. Cool McCool recalled Jack Benny in voice and compared himself to fictional movie star Rod LaRue in the looks department. In addition, his mustache contained communications capabilities, an invention worthy of any spy.

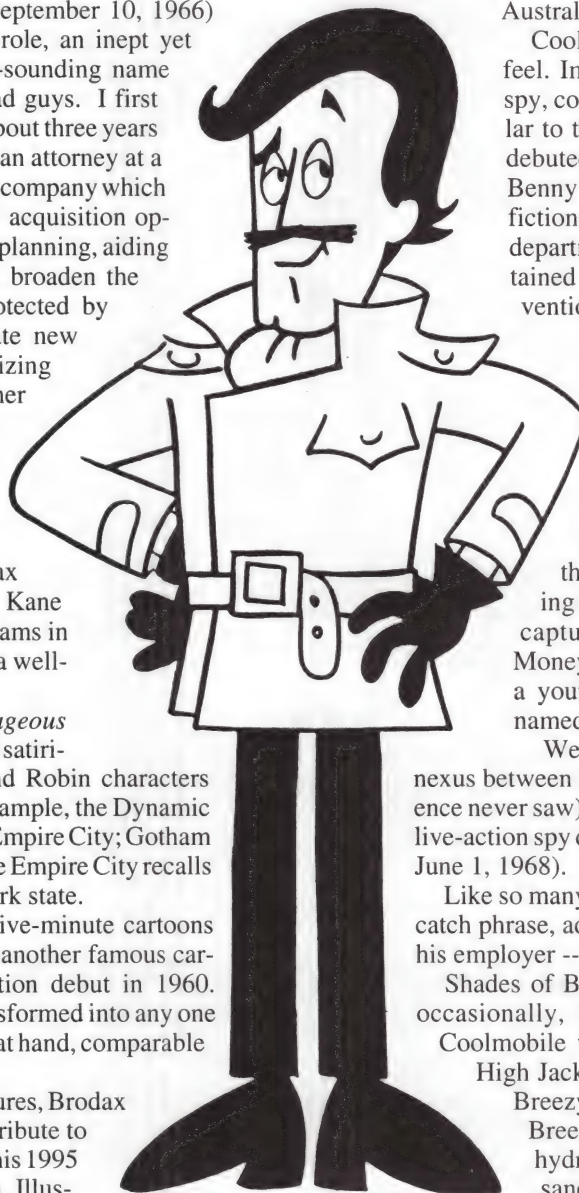
Directly referencing James Bond, the most famous spy of the era and perhaps of all time, the show's opening lyrics spelled out the title character's name -- "C double-oh L."

At Secret, Inc., Cool McCool reported to Number One who constantly expelled his subordinate from the office with various devices, including ejection chairs, after hearing about the capture of criminals. Bond had Miss Moneybags and McCool had his version, a young female office assistant, the aptly named Friday.

We can safely presume the absence of a nexus between Cool McCool's boss (whom the audience never saw) and the elusive Number One from the live-action spy drama *The Prisoner* (First Aired: CBS, June 1, 1968).

Like so many other characters, Cool McCool had a catch phrase, admittedly borrowed from the motto of his employer -- "Danger is my business!"

Shades of Bob Kane's Batman creation surfaced occasionally, for example, Cool McCool had a Coolmobile with gadgets galore. In the episode High Jackers Jack, he explains to his assistant, Breezy, the car's mechanics. "You'll notice, Breezy, that the Coolmobile runs on super-hydro-electric turbines powered by thousands of megatons of atomic energy." An emergency power system consisted of a flashlight battery.



Danger is his business



Like any self-respecting hero, Cool McCool battled the bad guys in his adventures. One such villain was Hurricane Harry, a rather large fellow who possessed the ability to create immense wind gusts by inhaling air through his buck-toothed mouth and exhaling. Another was the Rattler, a snake of a villain, literally.

In the episode *Two Fats and a Fink*, Hurricane Harry discovers he has a lookalike, the Maharajah of Mish Mash. Like any self-respecting, no-good, rotten-to-the-core arch-villain, he attempts to take advantage of his situation, specifically, in a diamond-stealing plan. Fans will note a royal lookalike storyline in *The Flintstones* episode *Royal Rubble* (First Aired: ABC, December 10, 1965) where Barney has a double -- the long-lost Prince Barbaruba of Stonyrock-arabia.

Cool McCool's enemies band forces to steal gifts from a wealthy family during a wedding in the episode *College of Crooks*. Cool McCool returns to his alma mater, the now-abandoned Benedict Arnold College, to figure out his next move. "I always did my best work there," he says. Coincidentally, the college also happens to be the criminal team's headquarters.

Typical for the academic surrounding, the Owl helms the team and humorously announces each criminal's function. Professor of Botany -- the Rattler. Professors of Science -- Dr. Madcap and Greta Ghoul. Professor of Physical Education -- Hurricane Harry. College Cheerleader -- Jack-in-the-Box.

Somehow, Cool McCool gets trapped on a chandelier and Dr. Madcap proceeds to shoot him with a machine gun. Not a good idea. The chandelier falls on the criminals leaving Jack-in-the-Box holding a bomb about to explode. Cool McCool explains to Number One that he captured the crooks and escaped the explosion by going to a very familiar place -- the principal's office. (I know. Colleges don't have principals.)

Cool McCool's ability to fight crime, or lack thereof, was hereditary in nature. Harry McCool, Cool's father, formed part of a police trio with his brothers, Tom and Dick. Cool McCool introduced these stories by strumming a banjo and singing a verse ending with the line "My pop, the cop."

Each character was different visually, although all were mustachioed. Harry was tall and lanky. Dick was medium-sized and overweight. Tom was short and mumbled his words to the consternation of Tom who always looked to Harry for interpretation.

Erickson surveyed the show's visual aspect in Television Cartoon Shows. "*Cool McCool* was mildly funny but generally uninspired. The series was occasionally effective in invoking the 'film noir' milieu and forced-perspective art of its mentor Bob Kane. At other times, the backgrounds were too busy for the audience to appreciate what was going on in the foreground -- a surprisingly clumsy graphic choice from the series' British animation staff at TVC Studios, who'd done such excellent work on Brodax' *The Beatles*."

Cool McCool only lasted for the 1966-67 season, however, reruns aired during the following two seasons. Despite its relatively brief shelf-life, Cool McCool has interest for animation folk and popular culture historians alike. In both cases, the more obscure programs sometimes prove to be more interesting and challenging than well-known offerings vis-à-vis placing the programs in context to the circumstances and events of the time.

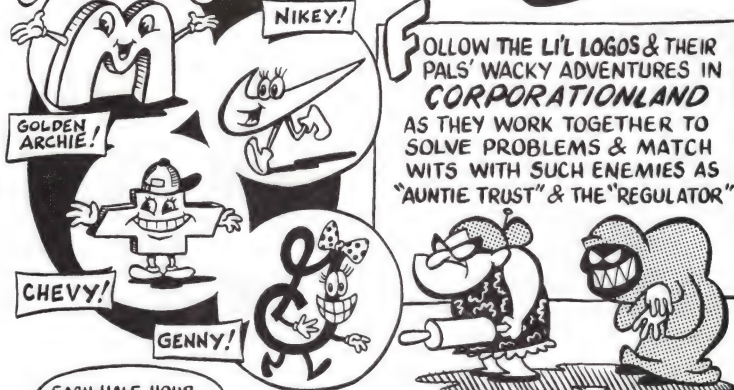


# CULTURAL JETLAG

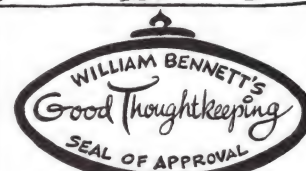
by Jim Siergey & Tom Roberts

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# PICAYUNE INTELLIGENCE

BY  
CHARLES  
ULRICH

R-A © J. WARD



## Digging Buried Treasure

In this column, I will write about Jay Ward cartoons. While Jay Ward and Bill Scott are best known for *Rocky and His Friends* and *The Bullwinkle Show*, I will not neglect their other cartoons, which include *Hoppity Hooper*, *George of the Jungle*, and commercials for Quaker cereals such as Quisp, Quake, and Cap'n Crunch. Nor will I forget Jay Ward and Alex Anderson's earlier *Crusader Rabbit*, the first successful cartoon made for television.

Jay Ward cartoons have always ranked highly in the ANiMATO! Film Poll. *The Bullwinkle Show* was consistently voted the #1 television series until it was finally knocked into second place in 1994-5 by *The Simpsons*. (Matt Groening had of course tipped his hat to Jay Ward with the middle initials of three generations of male Simpsons: Abraham J. Simpson, Homer J. Simpson, and Bartholomew J. Simpson echo Rocket J. Squirrel and Bullwinkle J. Moose, just as the earlier duo reflect the names of their creators, J. Troplong Ward and William J. Scott.) Even with the recent boom in television animation, all four Jay Ward series are still in the top forty in the 1998 poll, with *Rocky and Bullwinkle* and *George of the Jungle* at numbers three and four.

The interest in Jay Ward cartoons is not limited to hard-core animation fans that read ANiMATO! There has been a string of projects involving Jay Ward characters throughout the 1990s. A variety of Jay Ward cartoons were released on home video at the beginning of the decade: *Rocky and Bullwinkle* (Buena Vista, twelve volumes), *George of the Jungle* (CBS/Fox, eight volumes), and *Crusader Rabbit* (Rhino, two ill-fated volumes). *Rocky and Bullwinkle* and *George of the Jungle* proved popular on cable television. New prints of *Rocky and Bullwinkle* and *Hoppity Hooper*

have been made for foreign syndication. *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Book* (reviewed in this issue) and *Fractured Fairy Tales* are illustrated books based on the shows.

Rocky, Bullwinkle, Boris, Natasha, and occasionally Dudley have appeared in commercials for Taco Bell, Target Stores, and Energizer batteries, as well as unauthorized and unaired commercials for Frosted Cheerios. Bullwinkle has appeared on Minnesota State Lottery tickets. Data East produced a Rocky and Bullwinkle pinball machine. Universal Studios theme parks in Hollywood and Orlando have live-action shows featuring Rocky, Bullwinkle, Boris, Natasha, Dudley, Nell, and Snidely. A live-action *Boris and Natasha* feature film was beset with difficulties and barely released, but Disney's big budget *George of the Jungle* was a success.

Next year is destined to be an exciting year for fans of Jay Ward cartoons. 1999 will be the fortieth anniversary of *Rocky and His Friends*, which debuted on ABC on November 19, 1959. A Dudley Do-Right ride is scheduled to open at Universal Studios Florida. Two feature films based on Jay Ward cartoons are scheduled for release. *Rocky and Bullwinkle* will be a mixture of live-action and animation à la *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*? Robert De Niro is said to have considered taking the role of Boris Badenov. *Dudley Do-Right* is slated to star *George of the Jungle*'s Brendan Fraser and to be directed by Hugh Wilson (*First Wives Club*).

The other big event of 1999 is the publication of the Jay Ward book I've been waiting for since 1986. Voice actor and ANiMATO! columnist Keith Scott has written a complete history of the studio, and it will be published by St. Martin's Press. I like to think of myself as the leading expert on Jay Ward cartoons in the northern hemisphere, but Keith has the world title hands down. He also provided the voices of Bullwinkle, Boris, and Dudley in some of the projects mentioned above.

The title of this column comes from the name of a Frostbite Falls newspaper featured in the Rocky and Bullwinkle adventure *Buried Treasure* (episodes 125-138, first aired in March and April, 1961). This adventure, which was written by head writer Bill Scott (also co-producer and the voice of Bullwinkle), will serve to exemplify some of the characteristic qualities of Jay Ward cartoons.

The Frostbite Falls *Picayune Intelligence* is run by Colonel McCornpone, a southern gentleman played by Paul Frees. In order to boost the paper's circulation, the colonel buries a million dollars in confederate money and prints clues to its whereabouts in the paper. Meanwhile, Boris Badenov and his gang are planning a bank robbery.

The newspaper name is a classic Bill Scott pun. *Picayune*, originally a small Spanish-American coin, is also a newspaper name, as in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*. I'm not aware of any newspaper called the *Intelligence*, but there are some called the *Intelligencer*, such as the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer*. Put the two together and you get the *Picayune Intelligence*. Since *picayune* also means "paltry" or "petty", the title could be interpreted as an insult either to the mental capacity of the newspaper's staff or readership or to the significance of the news reported.

Colonel McCornpone's surname alludes to a traditional southern food, corn bread made without eggs or milk. I'm not sure why the Scottish prefix *Mc-* makes it funnier, but I feel that it does. Bill Scott probably agreed, since he used the same device elsewhere: cf. Scurvy McMurk in *Upsideaism*, or Boris Badenov as Pete McMooss in *Pottsylvania Creeper*.

*Buried Treasure* is unique among Rocky and Bullwinkle adventures in that Boris appears without his usual sidekick, Natasha Fatale. Instead he is accompanied by the Light-Fingered Five Minus Two: Spike, Three-Finger, and Slug. Aside from



her starring role as Rocky, June Foray plays only three bit parts in this adventure. Narrator William Conrad, on the other hand, plays one of his larger secondary roles as Three-Finger.

The humor in Jay Ward cartoons works at many levels. At the most blatant level, you have funny voices (especially Bullwinkle's), foolish behavior (especially Bullwinkle's), and such obvious gags as the repeated switching of the two straw valises, one containing \$100,000 and the other containing three pairs of socks and a peanut butter sandwich.

Bullwinkle does some pretty dumb things in *Buried Treasure*. After remarking to Rocky, "You may be astute; I'm a stupe," he warns the people at the bank that it's about to be robbed. Unfortunately, he does so by yelling, "Hey, everybody! It's a stick-up!" and the guards open fire on him. Later, he mistakes the money from the robbery for the Picayune Pot. When he realizes that it isn't real Confederate money, he concludes that it's counterfeit Confederate money.

At more sophisticated levels, Jay Ward cartoons contain puns, satire, and allusions to popular culture. With the passing of time, many of these allusions have become pretty obscure. How many people these days remember Durward Kirby or Henry Cabot Lodge?

For examples of this more subtle type of humor, consider the following dialogue from the end of episode 127.

**Slug:** Gee, you're going to use the same dynamite to break into the bank and blow up the squirrel?

**Boris:** Well, you know, is a low-budget show.

**Rocky:** That voice! Where have I heard that voice?

**Narrator:** Well, it looks as if Rocky has only a few seconds to remember, for the fuse leading to the dynamite is growing shorter and shorter, and so, unfortunately, is our time. Be sure to see our next episode, *Sweet Violence or The Yegg and I*.

Boris's line exemplifies the self-referential humor typical of the series, where the characters know they are in a cartoon. At various times, Boris talks back to the narrator, threatens him, and asks him what he's whispering about. Rocky's line is a catch-phrase that June Foray often uses in interviews. (More about catch-phrases in my next column.)

The narrator wraps up the cliff-hanger

with two alternative titles for the next episode. The first alludes to sweet violets, an edible flower, or perhaps to the song "Sweet Violets", which was recorded by Dinah Shore and by Mitch Miller in the 1950s. The second title alludes to *The Egg and I*, a 1947 film starring Claudette Colbert and Fred MacMurray. The film also featured the first appearance of Ma and Pa Kettle, who were spun off into a series of films. Ma Kettle was played by Marjorie Main, whose voice June Foray often imitated in *Fractured Fairy Tales*, e.g. for Hansel and Gretel's mother ("Anyone for roast leg of log?"). Both of the cliff-hanger titles have been modified to reflect Boris's criminal proclivities. *Yegg* is a slang term for a safecracker.



Boris uses two aliases in *Buried Treasure*. As leader of the Light-Fingered Five Minus Two, he is known as Baby Face Braunschweiger, which alludes to bank robber Baby Face Nelson (1908–1934) and to a smoked liver sausage. He also disguises himself as Honeychile Moosemoss, a southern-accented, blond-haired, female moose. (Shades of Bugs Bunny!) "Honeychile" (i.e. honeychild) is a southern term of endearment. The surname refers to her putative species and to the Spanish moss found on the live oak trees outside a stereotypical southern mansion.

In *Buried Treasure*, Boris consults both *The Golden Treasury of Fiendish Plans* and *The Pocket Book of Fiendish Plans*. Twice he utters his favorite curse, "Raskolnikov!"—thereby invoking the protagonist of Dostoevski's *Crime and Punishment*.

The name of the gang of bank robbers, the Light-Fingered Five Minus Two, is an allusion to the Firehouse Five Plus Two, a Dixieland band active in the 1950s and 1960s. The leader of the Firehouse Five Plus Two was trombonist Ward Kimball—that's right, the Disney animator. The piano player was Frank Thomas, another of Disney's Nine Old Men. Their original banjo player was Harper Goff, who designed the Nautilus for *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and the Jungle Cruise for Disneyland. An early drummer was Jim Macdonald, Disney sound effects man and voice of Mickey Mouse for thirty years. One of their tuba players was George Bruns, composer of *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*. Other members of the band, who may or may not have been Disney employees, included Danny Alguire (trumpet), George Probert (clarinet), Dick Roberts (banjo), and Eddie Forrest (drums).

The opening episode of *Buried Treasure* pokes fun at Frostbite Falls, pointing out that the small town has a city hall, a church, a bowling alley, and a movie house—all in the same building. (*Top Gun* is playing at the Vogue movie house. This is presumably not the 1986 Tom Cruise film, but the 1955 western starring Sterling Hayden.) Nearby towns have such rustic names as Possum Trot and Tadpole Center, while the local bank is the Farmers and Swineherds National Bank. (There really are Farmers Banks in the United States, including the Farmers and Dealers Bank, the Farmers and Mechanics National Bank, and the Farmers and Merchants State Bank. The "Swineherds" part is admittedly a bit fanciful.)

Rocky is taken to the Koochiching County Hospital for treatment of "a frontal tumescent edema with capillary suffusion", i.e. a bump on the head. This supports the claim that Frostbite Falls is based on International Falls, Minnesota, real-life county seat of Koochiching County, home of Jay Ward's favorite football player Bronko Nagurski, and "Icebox of America" in the days before Alaska was admitted to the Union.

There are several slip-ups in continuity in *Buried Treasure*. In fact, the adventure seems to have more than its share. Boris's moustache disappears momentarily while he is frozen in a block of ice in episode 138. Slug looks like Spike in episode 127. A fourth, unnamed and unspeaking, gangmember appears in episodes 125 and 128. Boris's alias is spelled *Braunsheiger* in episode 127 and



*Braunschwieger* in episode 128. The bank name is sometimes spelled with apostrophes, sometimes without. Boris is wielding a hammer in episode 132 but a club in episode 133. These errors can probably be blamed on the Mexican animation studio.

On the other hand, Bill Scott himself must shoulder the blame for the loss of one pair of socks and one peanut butter sandwich from a closed valise between episodes 131 and 132. Presumably, the finer points of continuity were not considered as important as being funny. And I think that three pairs of socks and a peanut butter sandwich are funnier than the original four pairs of socks and two peanut butter sandwiches. Another error originating north of the border is the fact that Rocky and Bullwinkle escape in episode 135 on the railroad handcar that was destroyed in episode 134. Note also that William Conrad plays the sheriff in episode 126, but Paul Frees plays him when he returns in episode 135.

Of course, these inconsistencies would have gone unnoticed when the shows were watched in their original format of two episodes each week. They only become apparent when fanatical viewers direct their intelligence to the picayune details of the videotaped adventures of a moose and a squirrel.



Charles Ulrich is the editor of the *Frostbite Falls Far-Flung Flier*, which is about to cease publication with its fortieth issue.



**THE FROSTBITE FALLS  
Far-FLUNG FLIER**

Volume Ten, Number One      "September, 1995"

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| <p>Editor: Charles Ulrich<br/>         Flier flinger: Gary David<br/>         Contributors: Richard Anderson<br/>                           Sharon Molloy<br/>         Characters copyright: Jay Ward Productions</p> |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

"All the moose that's fit to print"

So Bullwinkle described himself in the first installment of the little-remembered *Bullwinkle J. Moose* comic strip. (How little-remembered? In 1991, a well-known expert on comic strips told me flat out that there had never been such a strip!)

The strip debuted on July 23, 1962. It was syndicated by the McClure Newspaper Syndicate. Although there is not known to have been a Sunday *Bullwinkle J. Moose* strip, some newspapers printed the daily strip in color. (Strangely enough, the existing color clippings are in three colors instead of the usual four: red, yellow, and black, but no blue.) The *Camden (New Jersey) Courier-Post* carried the strip (in black and white) through November 23, 1963 (the day after JFK's assassination). It is not known whether the strip continued in other papers after that date.

The *Bullwinkle J. Moose* comic strip was written and drawn by Al Kilgore (cf. FFFFF 3.2, page 10), who also did some issues of the *Rocky and His Fiendish Friends* comic book. Kilgore and John McCabe were co-founders of the Sons of the Desert, the organization for fans of Laurel and Hardy. Al Kilgore had a free hand in creating the print adventures of moose and squirrel. Bill Scott told Jim Korkis that he had no input into the strip, and that he respected Kilgore's work (cf. FFFFF 9.3, page 7). John McCabe wrote me in 1988 that "Al thought comedically solely along the lines of Jay Ward." The strip certainly bears this out. And, like Jay Ward cartoons, Kilgore's *Bullwinkle J. Moose* is full of references to popular culture, such as radio, television, and comic strips (cf. "Did you get it?", page 2).

Frostbite Falls Far-Flung Flier, Volume Ten, Number One, Page 1

The following corrections to *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Book* (reviewed on page 80) are offered in the interest of historical accuracy:

The correct title of episodes 209-222 is *Topsy Turvy World*, not *Topsy Turvy* (pages 9, 173). The correct title of episodes 333-338 (Chunovic's 293-298) is *Bullwinkles Testimonial Dinner*, not *Bulls Testimonial Dinner* (pages 9, 199). The latter title, which has appeared in lists for years, is obviously just an abbreviation for the correct title.

The correct spelling of the antigravity metal is upsidaesium, not upsidasium (pages 9, 126, 132).

One of the writers is named Chris Jenkyns, not Jenkins (page 13). Jenkyns is responsible for the Dudley Do-Right billboard shown on page 64.

The joke about the Kingdom of Normandie being near Third and La Brea (page 31) is from *Prince Hyacinth and the Dear Little Princess* (cf. FFFFF 8.4, page 11), not *Painting Theft*, which opens in Paris.

Junior's moral to The Jackrabbits and the Mule is "You never miss the waiter till the well runs dry", not ...till the water runs dry (page 33).

The correct title of episodes 323-326 (Chunovic's 283-286) is *Moosylvania*, not *Statehood for Moosylvania* (page 59). Chunovic uses the correct title on pages 9 and 197.

If Jay Ward always said that Mississippi would be the fifty-first state (page 66), he should have read his own promotional fliers (one quoted by Chunovic on page 61, another quoted in FFFFF 5.3, page 6), which gave that honor to Texas.

At the time of the recording sessions for *Fractured Fairy Tales*, Edward Everett Horton (1886-1970) was a septuagenarian, not an octogenarian (page 104).

Sam the Native's Poiburger stand is on Bloney Island, not Baloney Isle (page 117).

King Bushwicks island is New Greenpernt, not Greenpernt (pages 140-141).

Skaneateles (a small town near Syracuse, New York), not Skinnyapolis (page 149), is mentioned several times in *The Adventures of Bullwinkle and Rocky*.

In episode 48 of *Mr. Know-It-All*, Bullwinkle says, "However, if one lives in Death Valley, the task becomes a little tougher, but not surmountable, not... but not insurmountable" (page 152). Chunovic's version makes better sense, but it's not what's in the cartoon.

Captain Peachfuzz's ship in *Wailing Whale* is the S. S. Athabasco, not the S.S. Atabasco (page 154).

Bullwinkle speaks of antihistamine money (not to be sneezed at), not an antihistamine piece of information (pages 156, 215). Chunovic gets this right on page 183.

The head of the Hatful clan is named Devil Dan Hatful, not Hateful Dan Hatful (page 169).

## Corrections!



The actual words of the Pottsylvania national anthem are:

**Hail Pottsylvania! Hail to the black and the blue!**

**Hail Pottsylvania, sneaky and crooked through and through!**

**Down with the good guys, up with the boss**

**Under the sign of the Triple Cross!**

**Hail Pottsylvania! Hail, hail, hail!**

Chunovic has ...up with the bad and some extra hairs (page 170).

In the last episode of *Mucho Loma*, Zero is employed by the New York Mets, not the New York Yankees (page 194). The book reprints a storyboard panel showing the Yankees scoreboard, so presumably the team was changed between the storyboards and the finished cartoon. The Mets, not the Yankees, were the notoriously bad team in the early 1960's (cf. FFFFF 6.3, page 14).

The Weather Lady ends with Bullwinkle working in a fortune-telling machine, not with Rocky and Bullwinkle in matching fortune-telling machines (page 202).

Shakespeare and Bacon appear in episode 50 of *Peabody's Improbable History*, not a *Fractured Fairy Tale* (page 214). Chunovic gets this right on page 34.

Bullwinkle does not say, "Hey look, Rocky, more fan mail from some flounder!" (page 215) The actual dialogue in the bumper is as follows:

Rocky: Look, Bullwinkle! A message in a bottle!

Bullwinkle: Fan mail from some flounder?

Rocky: No. This is what I really call a message. (I corrected a similar mistake in FFFFF 1.1.)

It was Paul Frees, not Bill Scott, who said "I don't wanna" at the end of the last recording session (page 219).

-Charles Ulrich



# CULTURAL JETLAG

by Jim Siergey & Tom Roberts



**GRUMPY...**



**SNEEZY...**



**seven**  
**PART II ...**

STARRING DEAN JONES KURT RUSSELL ANNETTE FUNNICELLO

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# The Worlds of Gerry Anderson

by Richard Holliss

## Part One: From *The Adventures of Twizzle* To *Thunderbirds*.

Footprints Publishing's new sculpture of pilot Scott Tracy at the controls of Thunderbird 1 is just the latest indication of the long-lasting popularity of this remarkable series which was first screened in 1965. Yet, as recently as four years ago, *Thunderbirds* fever struck once again when a range of collectibles became the number one Christmas toys in the UK.

Whether rescuing people trapped beneath the ruins of the Empire State Building, racing against time to avert a nuclear reactor from exploding or flying a death defying mission to save a runaway spacecraft from colliding with the sun, *Thunderbirds* was epic in both scope and design with amazing special effects and thrilling storylines.

In the same way that Gene Roddenberry's name has become synonymous with *Star Trek*, so the name Gerry Anderson is inextricably linked with *Thunderbirds*. The series has been, without doubt, the crowning achievement of his career and yet, despite its technically advanced puppetry, blockbuster visuals and ingenious characterisation, *Thunderbirds* was in marked contrast to some of Anderson's earlier work.

In Britain during the mid-fifties, the monopoly held by BBC Television had



Gerry Anderson

been threatened by the arrival of newcomer Independent Broadcasting (ITV). Curious about the new medium Gerry Anderson, then only 25 years old, had left his job as dubbing editor at Shepperton Studios and joined a small independent film company called Polytechnic Films.

Forming a partnership with Polytechnic's camera operator Arthur Provis, Anderson converted an old mansion at Islet Park in Maidenhead, on the outskirts of London, into a production company. The building's cavernous ballroom was transformed into a film stage while the apartments above served as offices.

In 1957, Anderson and Provis formed AP Films (from their initials) with the sole

intention of producing television commercials. But, commissions were not forthcoming and the future looked bleak until, that is, two women producers contacted them with a proposal for a new children's television series. One introduced herself as Roberta Leigh, the other as Suzanne Warner. It was Warner that had brought together much of the necessary business acumen to launch the commercial television franchise Associated TeleVision (ATV), while Leigh, had written a number of scripts for a children's puppet series called *The Adventures of Twizzle*. Anderson and Provis, eager to save their company's dwindling assets, agreed to deliver 52 fifteen minute episodes.

Much to their surprise, the budget was a mere one thousand dollars, but it did allow AP Films to hire extra members of staff including artist and photographer John Read, instructional film maker Reg Hill and secretary Sylvia Thamm, who later became Gerry's wife and business partner.

*The Adventures of Twizzle* turned out to be a rather crudely made puppet series and featured a small boy with knee length breeches and a bobble hat.

With the ability to stretch his arms and legs, Twizzle was usually called upon to help his friends out of trouble including Footso the cat, Jiffy the broomstick man, Candy Floss and Jack in the Box. The puppets were fairly primitive in design, with wooden bodies and paper-mache heads. Twizzle's telescopic legs were made



## "Anything can happen in the next half hour!"

from cardboard and the operating strings resembled thick black carpet thread.

Arthur Provis handled lighting, Gerry Anderson was the director and John Read became the cameraman. Shot on 35mm black and white film, the cost of constructing Reg Hill's miniature sets, coupled with the puppeteers' wages, meant that the budget was quickly exhausted. Leigh, as the shows creator, writer and producer, agreed to Anderson's request to increase the budget by a further sixty dollars per episode.

Among the three puppeteers hired to work on the series was Christine Glanville who eventually assumed the role of chief puppeteer on later shows. Roberta Leigh's colleague, former music teacher and conductor Barry Gray, composed the music. Gray was to become a permanent employee of AP Films and was responsible for the stirring military style themes that quickly became a trademark of any Anderson production.

*The Adventures of Twizzle* debuted on ITV in November 1957, and spawned a whole host of merchandising items including annuals, comic strips and colouring books. Delighted with the reception it received from viewers and critics alike, Leigh approached Anderson with a new puppet series called *Torchy the Battery Boy*. Torchy, who lived in Topsy Turvy Land, was able to help others with the aid of a magic light attached to the front of his hat.

The Torchy puppets, including Pom Pom the poodle, Mr Bumble-Drop, Flopsy the Rag Doll, Squish and Bossy Boots were constructed from plastic wood and stood approximately 20" in height. This necessitated placing the puppeteers gantry some twelve feet above the set.

All the special effects were provided by Derek Meddings, an enthusiastic young man and protege of veteran special effects ace Les Bowie. Meddings' went on to supervise the special effects on all of Anderson's later series before 1970, finally making his name on feature film such as *Batman*, *Superman* and the Bond film *The Spy Who Loved Me*.

To improve the show's technical specifications Anderson told Reg Hill to replace the painted backdrops with three-dimensional sets. "I constantly strived to improve the series," he later remarked, "placing the backgrounds further back, for example, so that the puppet's shadows wouldn't fall on the backdrop."

He further proposed the installation of an electrically operated solenoid that would allow the puppet's mouths to move in synchronisation with the dialogue and suggested to Roberta Leigh that she should incorporate the device in a totally new series. But Leigh was content with the success of *Torchy*, and so set up her own company to work on a further series, as well as a new children's series called *Sarah and Hoppity*. A short time later, Anderson's partner Arthur Provis left AP Films to help her co-produce a science fiction puppet series called *Space Patrol*.

sons) and his faithful companions Dusty the Dog and Rocky the horse. Kenneth Connor, one of the stars of the famous 'Carry On' films and actor David Graham provided additional voices.

Now producing his own series Anderson was free to experiment with the lip-sync device which he had nicknamed the 'four channel natter'. Quite simply, a solenoid was fitted inside the puppet's head which electromagnetically opened and closed the mouth. This procedure was powered by two wires that ran to the puppeteers hand control, each of which carried a 50 volt DC pulse synchronised with a tape machine on which the characters dialogue had been pre-recorded. Although this technique was to become more sophisticated on later series, the basic concept never changed. Dialogue for each episode was recorded at either AP Films or at the Gate Recording Theatre, Boreham Wood and when completed, the tape was edited and music and sound effects added. The puppeteers listened to a dupe of the tape, while an EMI TR90 tape recorder was used to regulate the pulses needed to activate the mouth mechanisms.

Other improvements included manufacturing the puppet heads from fibreglass with a special device to move the eyes back and forth. With the additional weight such refinements made to the construction of the marionettes, steel wire less than 0.003 in diameter was used to support the puppets limbs while a slightly stronger version was employed for the bodies. These were then sprayed with an anti-flare aerosol to minimise reflection under the studio lights.

As art director for the series Reg Hill, assisted by Derek Meddings, was responsible for constructing the highly detailed models of the wild west town. With a budget of 5,400 dollars per episode, Anderson was also able to hire more puppeteers. With sets measuring up to 30 feet across, this extra influx of staff allowed the filming of more than one scene at a time.

Flushed with the success of *Four Feather Falls*, Anderson approached Granada Television with the idea for a series set in the near future featuring a flying vehicle called *Supercar*. The reasons were two-fold, not only was it an opportunity to start afresh, but using vehicles for the characters to sit in solved the age old problem of how to



Artist's representation of Twizzle

After Leigh's departure, Anderson signed a seven year lease on a larger studio in Slough, West London, to make a new 52 episode series for Granada Television called *Four Feather Falls*. Set in the wild west, this new puppet series was based on an idea by Barry Gray and featured the adventures of Sheriff Tex Tucker (whose voice was supplied by English actor Nicholas Par-





Gerry Anderson, Mary Anderson, Arthur Provis and Bob Bell at a Fanderson convention

make puppets walk convincingly. Walt Disney encountered a similar problem when animating the prince in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1938). Like a number of animation studios, when faced with trying to imitate human movement, Disney had resorted to rotoscoping (the tracing of live action footage) in order to obtain greater realism.

But, when Granada turned the *Supercar* project down, Anderson spent a brief period directing television commercials before being contacted by Lew Grade, on behalf of ATV. A shrewd business man, Grade wanted to know what *Supercar* would cost to produce. Anderson suggested a budget of between eight and nine thousand dollars per episode, but ATV's final offer was only half the amount. Grade did, however, personally promise a contract for 26 episodes.

The format for the series involved a group of specialists working in the Nevada Desert who have constructed a multi-purpose form of transport called *Supercar* with the ability to travel on land, under the sea and out into space. Among the team members were *Supercar*'s pilot Mike Mercury, scientists Professor Popkiss and Dr Beaker and a young boy called Jimmy (voiced by Gerry's wife Sylvia) who owned a pet monkey called Mitch. A villain by the name of Masterspy, with an uncanny resemblance to Hollywood actor Sidney Greenstreet, and his creepy assistant Zarrin were constantly trying to steal *Supercar*. Still caricatures, with heads disproportionate to the size of the bodies, the marionettes were more sophisticated than those used in *Four Feather Falls*, so Gerry Anderson dreamt up a new name- Supermarionation

- to describe this unique blend of science and puppetry.

While the concept for *Supercar* was Anderson's, the actual design of the craft was the brainchild of Reg Hill, who constructed a seven foot mock-up for the laboratory sequences and a variety of miniature versions for the flying sequences. Resembling a rocket shaped hovercraft, *Supercar* was painted bright red with retractable fins. But, for the underwater sequences, Anderson and Meddings employed a technique that was used to greater effect on later shows such as *Stingray* and *Thunderbirds*. Having suspended the craft above a model seabed, Meddings then placed a large glass tank, only a few inches deep, between the camera lens and the set completing the illusion that *Supercar* was actually under water.

Anderson also decided to utilise back-projection for the aerial sequences, so before filming commenced, some 20,000 feet

of sky footage was shot. Miniature rocket jets, especially manufactured for AP Films by the Schermuly Pistol Rockets Apparatus Company, gave *Supercar*'s engines the necessary authenticity.

The series first aired in January 1961, earning ATV nearly six million dollars in overseas revenue. Sold to America through the Incorporated Television Company (ITC), *Supercar* grossed a staggering 750,000 dollars in under five weeks.

In order to cope with the request for product licences, Anderson set up a separate division called AP Merchandising, under the control of colleague Keith Shackleton. It was Shackleton who masterminded a 'Supercar Club' members of which received an identicard,

codebreaker, optical magnifying glass and badge. After the announcement of a *Supercar* model kit, 7,000 applications were received within the first two weeks! Books on the series sold in excess of 250,000 copies with the American market releasing a number of tie-in items including, cut-out books, dolls, mechanical toys and comics.

*Fireball XL5* followed in 1961, and had the distinction of being the first and last Gerry Anderson series to be networked on American television. Set in the year 2067, it related the adventures of Colonel Steve Zodiac and his crew of space explorers. Derek Meddings and Reg Hill designed the promotional brochure for the series with new member of the team, Bob Bell serving as Art Director. Anderson and Meddings also enlisted the assistance of a young special effects technician called Brian Johnson, whose later film credits included *2001 A Space Odyssey* and *Dragonslayer*. Scriptwriters for the series included Den-



Fireball XL5



nis Spooner who went on to write episodes of *The Avengers* and *Doctor Who*.

*Fireball XL5* was also the first of Gerry Anderson's shows to introduce the theme of World Organisations set-up to combat evil. From here on, each new series featured some kind of uniformed force, in this case the World Space Patrol, dedicated to saving lives or averting disaster.

Fireball XL5 was constructed by Reg Hill and Derek Meddings and resembled a cross between a spacerocket and a large aircraft. Anderson also hit on the novel idea of launching the craft along a raised horizontal track, similar in design to the system utilised by the escaping Earth people in the 1951 George Pal science fiction film *When Worlds Collide*.

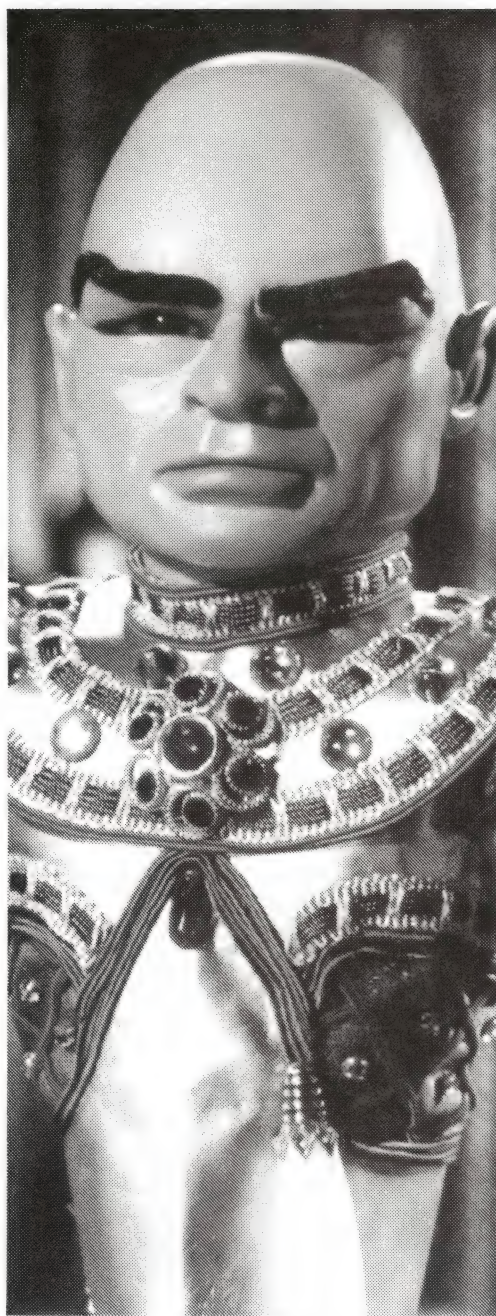
On reaching an alien planet, the spacecraft had a detachable nosecone, Fireball Jr., which allowed the crew to make a soft landing while leaving the main section in orbit. When exploring strange or hostile environments, the crew made use of Jetmobiles with the ability to hover above the ground. Ingeniously thought out, it was simply another device Anderson employed to overcome the problem of having the puppets walk on screen.

Steve Zodiac's crew aboard Fireball XL5 included a beautiful medical doctor, Venus (voiced by Sylvia Anderson), science officer Professor Matthew "Matt" Mattic, a navigational robot called Robert (with a mechanical sounding voice provided by Gerry himself) and an alien pet called a Lazoon. This large shaggy beast had a smooth flat nose, a bushbaby's eyes, huge floppy ears and a tail like a platypus. Nicknamed Zoonie, its favourite food was Martian Delight.

The characters were considered so lifelike by the majority of viewers that as the series progressed, a romantic link was established between Zodiac and Venus. Vocalist Ken Barrie was even employed to sing a passionate ballad about them over the end credits.

Like *Supercar*, merchandise from the series proved to be highly profitable with the most sought after item being a highly detailed miniature plastic kit of Fireball XL5 sponsored by Lyons Maid Ice Cream and manufactured by a company called Kitmaster.

Shortly after the series was completed, Lew Grade, who was now Managing Director of ATV, put in a request to buy AP Films. Reluctant to sell, Anderson did admit that the financial package on offer was



The Hood

very attractive. Finally accepting Grade's generous offer enabled AP Films to move to a larger studio with six stages each measuring 1,800 square feet. This extra room allowed for the construction of a prop department where intricately designed lilliputian items were constructed a third life-size. The new studio also allowed space for several cutting rooms, a scene dock and carpenters shop. In the wardrobe department, hundreds of exquisitely designed miniature costumes were manufactured, with a workshop set aside for the construction of the puppets themselves.

Thanks to American interest in the network debut of *Fireball XL5*, Anderson

was under pressure to film his new series called *Stingray* in colour. ITC had already signed a contract for 39 half hour episodes and invited Reg Hill to see examples of their new colour television transmissions. These early tests proved helpful in determining how the puppets and models should be painted.

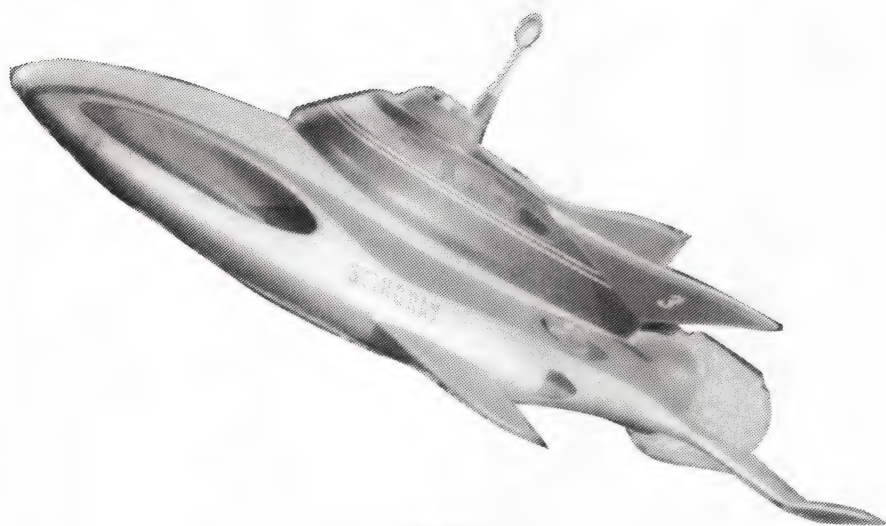
*Stingray* was also set a hundred years in the future and featured the underwater adventures of Captain Troy Tempest, a member of the World Aquanautic Security Patrol (WASP), whose headquarters were situated at Marineville, a land based facility which could sink below ground when under attack. In sole charge of WASP was the tyrannical Commander Shore assisted by his beautiful daughter Atlanta (voiced by actress Lois Maxwell, the original Miss Moneypenny from the James Bond films). Other characters included 'Phones', the hydrophone operator and Marina the beautiful, mute girl from under the sea.

Troy's nemesis was the evil Titan, who ruled the undersea kingdom of Titanica. His army of aggressive Aquaphibians constantly waged war against mankind in their futuristic Terror Fish submarines, but proved no match for *Stingray* with its arsenal of deadly sting missiles.

Filming the series caused Anderson and his team quite a few headaches. As water cannot be miniaturised, its massive proportions would easily make a mockery of any model effects sequences. One solution was to film at high speed (120 frames per second) but due to the increased use of film stock, there was little room for error and retakes were often expensive.

Another solution was to utilise the aquarium idea from *Supercar*. Constructed from half inch plate glass and measuring eight by four feet, the distance between the front and back panels was only six inches. Small fish were introduced and vegetable dye was used to make the water appear murky. A clever rippling effect was created above the tank to give the impression of sunlight reflecting off the surface. Behind the tank was a seabed diorama constructed from polystyrene, sand and plastic plants, all of which were dirtied down to give a realistic underwater effect. Meddings painted a backdrop to give the impression of depth of field, but with the series still being broadcast around the world (except the USA and Canada) in black and white, it was imperative that the backdrops were painted in such a way as to prevent the models blending in with the scenery.





The Stingray

Derek Meddings was particularly proud of one underwater sequence that occurred during the opening credits when Stingray is launched from its underwater base. In the scene a panel would slide back in the mountainside and the craft would shoot through accompanied by an enormous airbubble. Of course the two foot long model wasn't actually beneath the water, but manoeuvred instead across the dry set behind the giant aquarium. On the front of the tank (camera side), Meddings painted a part of the cliff face aligning it with a section of the model set that contained the rest of the cliff and tunnel exit. The painting perfectly matched the top of the hole from which Stingray emerged. Inside the aquarium and concealed behind the painting was a tube full of air. As the model was pulled through the cliff face door, Meddings squeezed the tube releasing a giant bubble. The effect on screen was extremely realistic.

*Stingray* was also the first of Anderson's shows to make extensive use of multiple heads for one puppet character, enabling a wide range of expressions. Sculptors even used real human hair to give a more lifelike appearance while a leading optical firm manufactured special glass eyes on which reduced photographs of the iris and pupil could be printed.

Ironically, *Stingray* was more popular in Britain than in America and ITC were forced to sell the series straight into syndication. Merchandise was, however, highly successful and culminated in the launch of Anderson's own weekly comic *TV21* on January 23rd 1965. A marketing scoop, *TV21* was a co-creation of Anderson, Shackleton and *Stingray* scriptwriter Alan Fennell. Utilising a newspaper style cover,

with full colour photographs from *Stingray* and *Fireball XL5*, the comic also contained stories from other popular television programmes such as *Burke's Law*, *My Favourite Martian* and the 'Daleks' from *Doctor Who*.

We felt that everything we touched turned to gold." Anderson recalled of the comic's success, "From here on, not only were we handling our own products and reaping the benefits, but we were now in a privileged position to pay royalties for the use of other comic strip characters." By January 1966, when *Thunderbirds* character Lady Penelope appeared in her own spin-off comic, Anderson's two magazines were selling in excess of 1.2 million copies.

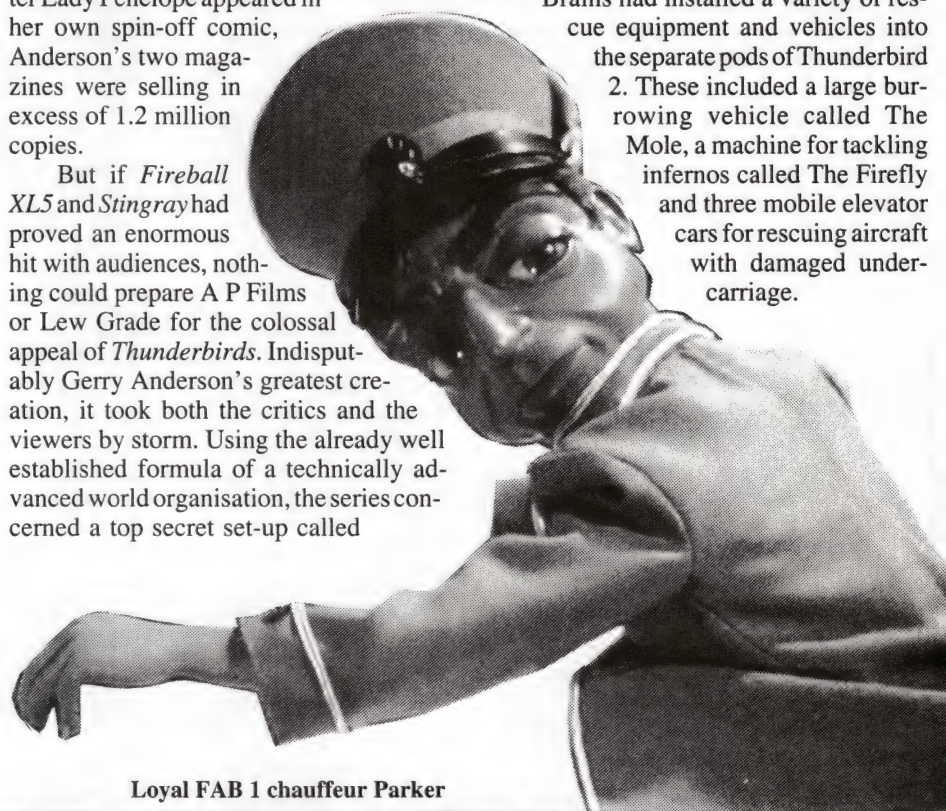
But if *Fireball XL5* and *Stingray* had proved an enormous hit with audiences, nothing could prepare A P Films or Lew Grade for the colossal appeal of *Thunderbirds*. Indisputably Gerry Anderson's greatest creation, it took both the critics and the viewers by storm. Using the already well established formula of a technically advanced world organisation, the series concerned a top secret set-up called

'International Rescue'. Amid tight security, the emergencies it responded to were deemed futuristic and spectacular and incorporated rescue equipment of a highly sophisticated nature.

Set in the year 2065, and working from a secret island base somewhere in the Pacific, International Rescue was the brainchild of ex-American astronaut Jeff Tracy. Each of the incredible Thunderbird rescue craft was piloted by one of Jeff's sons. The silver grey Thunderbird 1, with a top speed of 7,000 miles per hour, was in the sole charge of Scott, the eldest member of the family. Second in command was Virgil, who piloted Thunderbird 2, a giant freighter designed to transport heavy rescue equipment in interchangeable pods clamped to the crafts interior. Alan was the pilot of Thunderbird 3, an orange coloured three engine rocket capable of travelling in deep space and John commanded the orbiting space station Thunderbird 5. An advanced satellite, Thunderbird 5 monitored the world's SOS messages, intercepting them at will and responding in cases of extreme emergency. Jeff's fifth son Gordon captained Thunderbird 4, a yellow coloured ocean submarine with similar characteristics to that of Stingray.

All these incredible machines were designed by the seventh member of the International Rescue team, a bespectacled genius aptly referred to as 'Brains'.

To assist in all types of emergencies, Brains had installed a variety of rescue equipment and vehicles into the separate pods of Thunderbird 2. These included a large burrowing vehicle called The Mole, a machine for tackling infernos called The Firefly and three mobile elevator cars for rescuing aircraft with damaged undercarriage.



Loyal FAB 1 chauffeur Parker



Technical aspects included booster rockets on Thunderbird 1, enabling it to take-off vertically and land horizontally, a main fuselage on Thunderbird 2 that could rise on hydraulic legs to access the various rescue pods, a tracking beam capable of emitting high-power transmissions on Thunderbird 3, deep sea manoeuvrability on Thunderbird 4 and a vast array of scientific instrumentation for decoding SOS messages aboard Thunderbird 5.

According to the scriptwriters, Jeff Tracy's greatest fear was that, in the wrong hands, the remarkable Thunderbird craft could be used for destructive purposes. One such villain called The Hood was determined to learn the secrets of International Rescue and would deliberately sabotage aircraft or buildings, immaterial of the potential threat to human life, in order to hijack the remarkable rescue craft.



**Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward**

Other regular characters in the series included Kyrano the housekeeper, his daughter Tin Tin and Jeff's mother. But, perhaps the most fondly remembered was Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward, the organisation's glamorous London based agent, who beneath a cool exterior had all the adventurous daring-do of a female James Bond. Living in a mansion amid the peaceful Surrey countryside, Penelope possessed an exotic wardrobe and a shocking pink coloured Rolls Royce, with the number plate FAB 1. Keeping a careful eye on M'Lady's well-being was her chauffeur and man-servant, Parker.

The creation of Lady Penelope's Rolls Royce was a stroke of genius on the part of the show's producers. Apart from being officially approved by the Rolls Royce company, it contained a working TV monitor instead of driving mirror, six wheels with retractable studs for snow and

ice and tyre slashers to disable enemy vehicles. The car also featured an oil slick, a retractable machine gun, hydrofoils for travelling over water and a top speed of 200 miles per hour. As a final precaution both the glass canopy and body of the car were bullet proof.

A one third scale model of FAB 1 was constructed for the series at a cost of 6,000 dollars. For the scenes involving the machine gun that emerges through the front radiator grill, a genuine Rolls Royce shell was modified at a cost of three hundred dollars.

The budget per episode of *Thunderbirds* was approximately 60,000 dollars, 60 times more expensive than an episode of *Twizzle*, with a shooting schedule of ten days. Working to a tight deadline, Meddings and his team had to turn out something in the region of 150 separate special effects shots.

Of some help were the 200 different scale representations of the Thunderbird craft ranging in size from six to eight feet. Some were just enlarged sections that displayed a certain function. A three foot nose cone of Thunderbird 2, for example, was built to show the craft rising on its telescopic legs. A six foot version of Thunderbird 3 was constructed for filming close-ups in the launch silo. But, these numerous models did allow the simultaneous shooting of sequences thus saving time for additional rehearsals. Compressed gunpowder was used for scaled down explosions, firing rocket motors or jet engines and to heighten the dramatic effect some scenes were filmed at 80 frames a second instead of the usual 24.

Although the Tracy family and their various co-stars were more realistic in appearance then the crew of Fireball XL5,



**Villainous Titan puppet**

they were still caricatures. Sculpted in clay, the puppets were then constructed from fibre glass on plastic bodies. The weight of the puppets was just as crucial, as the nine operating wires had to be almost invisible on film. Character voices were provided by a number of well known British actors including Ray Barrett, Peter Dyneley and David Graham, while American Shane Rimmer voiced Scott Tracy with Sylvia Anderson as the voice of Lady Penelope.

The morning after the first episode was screened the newspapers were full of praise. "Surely", they argued, "programmes such as these could go no further."







Spectacular image of Gerry Anderson and Thunderbird 2 from the cover of Anderson's biography by Simon Archer and Stan Nicholls. Published 1996 by Legend Books. Anderson photo by David Finchett. Thunderbird 2 model by Richard Gregory.

But Lew Grade still failed to sell the series to an American network, even though Gerry Anderson was flattered by the reports that US Airforce and Navy officials had referred to *Thunderbirds* for inspiration.

With a flood of related products from toys to children's clothes, the series was a phenomenal success in 47 countries and grossed a total of 900,000 dollars in overseas revenue. Then, suddenly, without

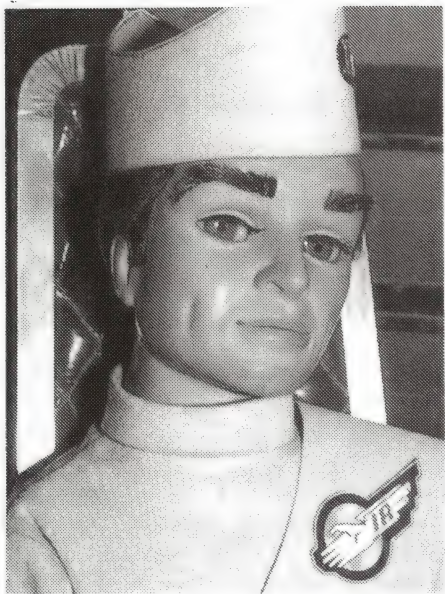
warning, Lew Grade informed AP Films that he wanted to drop *Thunderbirds* in favour of a new series. Anderson was, understandably, somewhat worried by this decision. The press were still actively promoting the series and had compared the success of his company to that of the Walt Disney organisation.

Aware of Anderson's disappointment, Grade suggested that *Thunderbirds* should be turned into a feature length motion

picture. A 16 week shooting schedule was agreed with United Artists at the beginning of January 1966. Anderson could even use his weekly comic *TV21* to publicise the event, in much the same way that it had successfully promoted the first *Doctor Who* film starring Peter Cushing.

Entitled *Thunderbirds Are Go!* the film told the story of the first manned space flight to Mars. Even with the intervention of fire spitting rock snakes, the mission is





**Scott Tracy of International Rescue**

considered a success. But, the astronauts find themselves in serious trouble on the return flight when they lose control of their gigantic spacecraft, the Zero X. It's up to International Rescue to save the crew before it crashlands.

This spectacular sequence formed the climax of the film. Built at a cost of 3,000 dollars, the Zero X weighed 50 lbs and was over six feet in length. Electronic detonators were used to set off the cordex explosives creating a massive fireball above the wreckage suggesting the ignition of hundreds of gallons of fuel. Derek Meddings and his pyrotechnicians used a combination of naphthalene, gunpowder, magnesium and napalm to achieve the desired effect.

Written by Gerry and Sylvia Anderson *Thunderbirds Are Go!* was directed by veteran series director David Lane. Puppet versions of British pop idol Cliff Richard and The Shadows were on hand to sing a romantic ballad during a surreal dream sequence, while the British press were full of praise, "How to pull strings and make \$10,000" said one. "Thunderbirds! So who needs people?" said another.

It was the kind of response that Gerry Anderson had become well accustomed to. For *Thunderbirds Are Go!* was yet another milestone in an amazing career. More importantly, its subplot of a Martian expedition was to provide the link to a brand new puppet series about an Earth probe that unwittingly upsets inter-planetary relations. A series totally different in style and format to anything that had gone before; *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons*. For Gerry Anderson a whole new era was about to begin...



**To be continued...**

Thunderbirds, Stingray and Fireball XL5 images © PolyGram Television International



# BROTHERS

## The McKimson Family Story

by **Robert P. McKimson, Jr.**

*This article is about the McKimson brothers, Tom, Robert and Charles, their background and place in the history of animation, as seen through the eyes of a son and nephew.*



*Tom and Charles McKimson*

Tom, Robert and Charles (in order of age), were born in Colorado and had two sisters. Their father, a newspaper publisher in Colorado and Texas, eventually moved the family to Los Angeles in 1926. The boys were all natural born artists and could draw from the time they could pick up a pencil. The natural talent is attributed to their mother, who had artistic ability, although undeveloped.

All three brothers began their animation careers at an early age. Tom and Robert began with Walt Disney in 1928. Tom worked as an assistant for Norm Ferguson and Robert as an assistant for Dick Lundy. They remained there about a year and started at \$18.00 per week. After three months they were elevated to \$25.00 per week. They left for more money and became head animators at The Romer Grey Studio, a new cartoon studio, started by the son of Zane Grey, the famous western writer. The major character was Binko the Cub, and they animated three or four pictures, which never got out of the pencil stage. To assist the brothers, the studio hired a few young animators, including Jack Zander and Pete Burness. It turned out that Romer decided to spend more money on having a good time than making cartoons. Thus, the studio was closed. It turned out that several years ago, most of the pencil drawings were found in the house where the studio was located.

In 1931, both brothers went over to the Harman-Ising cartoon studio as animators. At that time, the studio had an arrangement with Leon Schlesinger to release cartoons through Warner Bros. The major character was Bosko and Tom's first screen credit was *It's Got Me Again* and Robert's was *Bosko's Store*, both in 1932. In 1933 Schlesinger and Harman-Ising parted ways. Tom stayed with Harman-Ising and Robert went with Schlesinger who opened up on the Sunset lot and went on to release through Warner Bros. Thus, from 1931 until the cartoon studio closed in 1963, Robert McKimson was the longest continual employee of the studio.

In 1932 Robert had an automobile accident that, for whatever reason, made him animate faster, up to eighty feet per week, and he could visualize animation. He was always fascinated with portraiture and anatomy and went to art school for many years to perfect his artistic ability. He became the principal model model-sheet maker for Warners, and in the mid 1930's was named animation supervisor.

Brother Charles entered into the animation field in 1937 with Warner Bros. and animated for Tex Avery. His first screen



credit was in *Land Of The Midnight Fun* (1939). He remained there until 1941 when he was drafted into the U.S. Army Signal Corps. He animated training films for the Army until his release in 1946.

Meanwhile, Tom rejoined brother Robert at Warner Bros. in 1942 doing animation and layouts for director Bob Clampett. He remained with Warners until 1947 when he joined Whitman/Dell Publishing as Art Director for comic books, coloring books and comic strips. He eventually became overall Art Director and retired in 1972. However, he remained active doing comic books and animation art until his passing in 1998. Tom was one of the great talents in the history of comic book art. I believe his accomplishments and place in animation and comic book art is well established.

Charles rejoined Warners in 1946 and became an animator for brother Robert, and stayed until 1954. He then joined brother Tom at Whitman/Dell Publishing and became Art Director for comic and coloring books. He remained there until 1963, and left to start his own animation company, doing TV and motion picture titles and commercials, which were released through Pacific Title. Charles closed that business in 1994, but remains active with McKimson Productions doing animation art projects. His ability to create animated TV and motion picture titles was much sought after by the studios. Along the way, he earned two "Emmy" awards for his titles, which further honored his artistic and technical ability.

Robert McKimson, after animating over 50 cartoons for various directors, became himself a director at Warner Bros. Cartoons in 1944, replacing Frank Tashlin. His first release was *Daffy Doodles* and his first Bugs Bunny cartoon was *Acrobatty Bunny*, both in 1946. Additionally, in 1946, his first Foghorn Leghorn cartoon, *Walky Talky Hawky*, was nominated for an Academy Award. He was also nominated in 1957 for *Tabasco Road*. During his tenure at Warner Bros. he directed a total of 175 cartoons, and created several characters to include: Foghorn Leghorn - *Walky Talky Hawky* (1946), Hippety Hopper - *Hop, Look and Listen* (1948), Sylvester Jr. - *Pop 'Em Pop* (1950); Original, Speedy Gonzales - *Cat Tails for Two* (1953), and Tasmanian Devil - *Devil May Hare* (1954). He is also credited in the Library of Congress as author/artist of Bugs Bunny 1944. This is amongst 12 listings in the Library of Congress for the McKimson family, as author/artist, for various Warner Bros. Cartoon characters.



*Robert P. McKimson*

Robert created Foghorn Leghorn as a secondary character to Henery Hawk. The character was molded after Senator Claghorn of the Fred Allen radio show. Obviously, the character, from the beginning, became primary with Henery playing the foil. The Tasmanian Devil, Robert's most famous character, was almost put out of existence after the first cartoon.

The character was created after Robert, a crossword puzzle fanatic, suggested creating a character based upon a Tasmanian Devil, a name appearing in the puzzles. Up to that time, the studio had been using

characters usually modeled after rabbits, mice, cats, etc. He asked his animators, including brother Charles, to draw their version of the character. All of the versions looked somewhat similar. Robert took his version and the other drawings and put them into the model sheet of the character as we know him today. Thus, the first Tasmanian Devil cartoon *Devil May Hare*. After it appeared, the studio manager, Eddie Selzer, told Robert not to make anymore Taz cartoons. He thought the character was too violent. However, a couple of years later, the demand for more Tasmanian Devil

*Continued on Page 98*



# INSIDE THE TWISTED MIND OF CORKY QUACKENBUSH

by Michelle Klein-Häss

**Corky Quakenbush** is one of the hottest new talents to hit animation in a long time. His satiric, hilarious shorts for *MadTV* have made the show a contender in the late Saturday night slot once owned by *Saturday Night Live*. However, those shorts are not the whole story, as Corky has been involved with other projects and is looking forward to the future as he awaits word on development deals from both Fox and HBO. This article was constructed from a live interview at Corky's Space Bass Studio, as well as some Internet correspondence between Corky and the author.

**Michelle Klein-Häss:** What got you interested in animation in the first place?

**Corky Quakenbush:** Like a lot of animators, I started off doing animation as a kid. Cartooning, drawn animation, never really appealed to me. But when I was a little kid I saw *Davey And Goliath* on Sunday morning TV. That was the only kid-friendly show on Sunday mornings. It kinda freaked me out...here was this weird looking thing...I knew it wasn't real, but somehow it had this reality to it...real things — I didn't know what the concept of 3D was back then, but that 3D quality was what held my interest. Then I saw *Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer* by Rankin-Bass a few years later and my mind was blown again. The term "Animagic" which Rankin-Bass used to describe their animation really said it for me...it was indeed like magic. Real, inanimate objects moving around by themselves. It really fascinated me.

Then when I was 12 years old I really set myself to the task of finding out just what made this animation work. By then I was watching Ray Harryhausen movies and I couldn't quite figure out exactly what he was doing either, but I loved it nonetheless. What finally "cracked the code" was this documentary I saw on PBS with this teacher

who took a camera into New York City elementary schools and taught kids how to make animation. He taught them with construction paper cut-outs, but I was able to finally make the connection as I watched him explain the process. Suddenly a light went on in my head, and I asked my parents to get me a Super-8 camera with a single-frame button on it for my birthday. They did and I started animating. I did some of the other things that budding animators did...make flip-books on the corners of books and so forth.

**MK-H:** So you started doing animation around age 12...did you go to either art school or film school to learn more?

**CQ:** When I finally got into college I went to an upper-level school...the courses they offered were all on a Junior-Senior level, no Freshman or Sophomore stuff. The idea was to finish up a little quicker...three years rather than four. I finished up all my requirements in the first two years, and then for the last year I got a chance to take courses more for fun...art and filmmaking and photography. I had never really looked at film as a career...doing animation was just something I did as a hobby. I was groomed to go into a profession...law or medicine or something like that. I was

actually going to be a Psychiatrist...in retrospect, thinking about it, I don't think I would have done that well....you know, people would say "hey, I got this new shrink...he's Dr. QUACKenbush..." I suspect I probably made the right career move.

**MK-H:** You hate being called QUACKenbush, don't you?

**CQ:** I don't really have much choice in the matter...people do it no matter how much I correct them. I've gotten used to it by now. The name is QUAKE-enbush, but people always say "oh yeah, like you said..." QUACKenbush."

**MK-H:** Since you do dimensional animation, and the methods and metaphors of dimensional animation and 3D computer animation are very similar, do you see yourself using these sort of tools in your work?

**CQ:** In answer to your question, the form of the animation is not really what interests me - it's the story telling. Now, having said that, I would say that computer animation in the state it's in now holds no appeal for me because it still lacks a certain "organic" feeling. I think the appeal of so-called "dimensional" animation is that, unlike any other kind of animation, the subjects and the setting do actually exist in the real world. Viewing table-top animation or even something like *Life With Loopy* hits a person on a very visceral level. The textures excite me; the feeling that I can reach into that world is intriguing. But then I've always enjoyed dioramas, like at the Museum of Natural History in New York, and miniatures, particularly when there is evidence of the observations of the artist, like grime around a doorknob or a tiny mousetrap near the garbage pail.

I would be lying if I said I'm not eagerly looking forward to the day that CGI stuff will lose that mathematically created look, because I'm sure it will be easier than what we do now. But then again, it will be a trade off for the pleasure of looking into and lighting and effecting another world.

**MK-H:** Most people think you arrived on the scene with your work with *MadTV*...fill us in on your career from when you turned pro to when you got in with *MadTV*.

**CQ:** My first professional gig as an animator was around 1981 or so. I did some effects work for a documentary. I animated sound waves moving around using sand.





Corky Quakenbush on the job

The stuff I got paid to do back then was more along the lines of live action. I was an assistant cameraman all the way to being a DP, director of photography. I actually got an Emmy for cinematography in 1986, for a documentary about the LA River called *The River In Disguise*. I also worked as an editor, and also produced music videos and industrial, corporate videos...animation up until a few years ago at most supplied me with about 20% of my income. Those were mostly word-of-mouth gigs...someone would find out about the work I did on my own and ask me to do something.

I've always looked at animation as a way for me to do my own films. As a cameraman, I would always be doing work for other people and as a technical person...not

much room for creativity, although on gigs where I was the DP I got a little freedom to be creative. I wanted a full-on creative experience and stop-motion animation was a way for me to make my own films, with my own ideas, on my own budget, with my own time schedule. I could just go into my garage at 2 AM and fire off a few frames.

**Richie Häss:** You don't have to deal with actors and their temperments...

**CQ:** Yeah, although sometimes with my clay actors I have to beat them up a little to get them to work right! [laughs] It wasn't until I worked on this movie called *This is Spinal Tap*.

**MK-H:** Great freakin' movie.

**CQ:** Yeah, really funny movie. I was assistant cameraman, and the cinematographer I worked with, HJ Brown, was my mentor and taught me everything I know about cinematography. You can see HJ in a few concert scenes...this guy with a beard and a camera glued to his eye. Subsequently to this, we began doing a lot more work with Harry Shearer, who played Derek Smalls the bass player in the film.

When I started doing more work with Harry I met an executive producer named Kevin Bright who is now more better known for being the executive producer of *Dream On* and *Friends*. Kevin gave me my first big break on network TV when he asked me to animate some Barbie dolls for a sketch show. It turned out he got the most mail and comments about that sequence I did of anything on the show, so when he went and did another sketch show he contacted me and asked me to "do some more of your wacky animation for me." Not only was I able to do stuff that their writers scripted for me, but I got a chance to do a few of my own ideas as well. I created this one character named Ricardo and did a few bits with him...that was the first time I inflicted Ricardo on the world.

Unfortunately the show, called *Haywire*, on Fox, didn't quite take off...there was no effort to promote the fact that this show had actually improved...it was a sinking ship when Kevin got there and he managed to get three good episodes done before the entire project got killed. It was short but sweet...one of the bits I did for the show got 2nd prize for best animation made for TV at the 4th Animation Celebration, (not the World Animation Celebration but its predecessor event) even beating out stuff from *Ren & Stimpy* and *The Simpsons*. That was kinda cool.

After that, I started doing stuff on my own...I produced a show called *The Space Bass Medicine Hour* which was a half-hour show with both animation and live action sketch comedy. It was direct-broadcast over satellite as part of a bloc called *Weird TV* that some friends of mine were involved in. *Weird TV* was broadcast every Saturday night from Midnight to 3AM East Coast, which made it 9 to Midnight West Coast...we got incredible reviews from satellite magazines. We were doing it on a shoestring. We didn't see any profit or anything, but it was worth it because we had total control. We did a total of 13 shows and got great response.



**MK-H:** Do you think that we'll ever see those shows on video?

**CQ:** Yeah, but I don't really want to spend my time doing the marketing of the video or anything...I'd rather spend my time directing and producing new stuff. Distribution just takes too much time and effort, and I don't want to divide my time.

So anyway, I got this body of work together, and I was finally able to get an agent to shop my stuff around. My animation reel got the attention of Leslie Kolins, who is in late night and alternative development for Fox TV. She saw it and liked it enough to forward it to Fax Bahr and Adam Small who are the executive producers for *MadTV*. They liked it and got back to me and said "we want you to do this stuff for us."

At first, there was a lot of enthusiasm out of them...they were hot to license my stuff, "when can you deliver it?" and so on. I was ready to give them anything and everything they wanted that I owned outright. But the money people...Quincy Jones and David Salzman...didn't call at all. Finally the word filtered back to me that "yeah, we love your stuff but nothing got budgeted...the money's already spent." The season had already started, they had produced one or two shows, and they said "we just don't have the money for extras like animation." That was a big disappointment.

About a month later, though, I got another call from some friends of mine, Spencer Green and Mary Williams, who were writing on the show and they said "it just happens that for Christmas we have a little extra budget...want to do a parody of Rankin-Bass's *Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer*. And of course I told them "yeah, I'd love to do that." They had stumbled upon one of the things that made me want to do animation in the first place...I was totally into it. So they wrote *Raging Rudolph* and I took the script and made the short with no budget and only the hope of maybe getting some more work from them if this was a success.

After *Raging Rudolph* aired, they got so much positive feedback...faxes, letters, email...they couldn't deny the value of it.

They asked me to do a couple more shorts and actually gave me a bit of a budget to do it.

Ironically the next one up was *Davey and Son of Goliath*...again, my history coming back to haunt me. The first two things I did for *MadTV* went right to my roots, to the very things that inspired me to do animation in the first place.

*Davey and Son of Goliath* actually made it to the next year's Sundance Film Festival which was a big honor and totally unexpected...rarely does anything from TV ever get screened there. It was really great



**Zombie Donald**

that the organizers saw the piece as a film on its own merits, not just some clip from a TV show.

For the next season of *MadTV* I got to do 8 more pieces, and this season we are in the process of finishing up the last of 10. We're shooting the ninth one now, *South Parknuts* which takes *South Park* and blends it with *Peanuts*, and the last one is the sequel to *Davey and Son of Goliath* called *Davey and Goliath II: Pet Sematary*.

**MK-H:** How has it been, working on *MadTV* this year? Are they giving you enough of a budget?

**CQ:** In all fairness to QDE (Quincy Jones - David Salzman Entertainment), the producers of *MadTV*, it is a blessing that they have given us the budget that they have. *MadTV* is a very expensive show to produce and luckily for us, the animation we do is a highly favored part of the show because they could do without our bits more readily than they could do without the sketches. In other words, our segments are a bonus to the show, not the main ingredient. As a matter of fact the budget on the whole show was radically cut this year—with the exception of mine! In fact, they gave me three more segments to do this year than last year. It is unfortunate that there is no more money in the budget for the animation, but that's just the way it goes.

How can I complain? The show has given my work its highest profile yet, with over 4 million viewers every time one of them airs! I'm very grateful for the exposure. Not only that, QDE has been very supportive in my promoting myself and the work in film festivals like the World Animation Celebration and Sundance, where they paid for prints to be made. My only regret is that I am unable to both make a living for myself and pay my workers what they should be getting. That could all change, however, as I have a primetime series in development at Fox as well as a series in development at HBO.

By the way, today I was at a post house doing some transferring when the on-line editor of *MadTV* took me aside

to tell me that he had given a lecture at USC. When he mentioned that he edits *MadTV*, the response was intense, but he said that 80% of the commentary had to do with the stop-motion shorts - including the question, "How come they don't make those into their own show?" I told him next time anybody asks him that he should say: "Because you people don't email your requests to the network!"

**MK-H:** One thing that was really cool about the presentation you and your studio, Space Bass, did at WAC was your little video tour of the studio you had set up in your garage. Now that you are in this





**Corky and Goliath**

bigger, more professional space, is the way you do things as improvisational and loose?

**CQ:** That "Studio Tour" piece presented a tongue-in-cheek look at the Space Bass behind-the-scenes experience, but a lot of it rang true through the sarcasm and levity. I usually have to be forced by one thing or another to draw out a storyboard, and usually I don't even do it until I have shot the first couple of shots from a scene. I enjoy the sense of discovery that permeates the way we work at Space Bass. I encourage everyone to save junk like a pack rat because you never know when that little piece of plastic or that coil of wire or that toothpaste tube cap will be the perfect addition to a scene as something else.

Kevin Coyle, a very talented filmmaker in his own right, has been a great collaborator in this respect, as his eye for detail and his knowledge of filmmaking has complemented my style and sense of humor very nicely.

Many times when the "producer" in me takes over and I start to worry about costs and deadlines, I begin cutting corners creatively just to get a shot in the can. Kevin's

eye will not allow him to allow me to move ahead until things are about as "perfect" as they can be. I'm grateful to have him on board when he's not decorating the sets of huge blockbusters like *Godzilla* and *Time to Kill*.

There's a lot of other cool people who work with me at Space Bass. Roy Wood's models and miniature set pieces are constantly amazing to me. He has a knack for transforming real articles into realistic miniature decor. Emmeric Konrad, whose incredible art

work adds tremendous value to the look of the pieces he works on, including great caricatures when we parody real-life people such as Mike Tyson for the *Bwisk Tea* parody or Fred Gwynne in *Pet Sematary*. His work designing characters for *South Park* illustrates his genius in capturing and blending the essence of both *South Park* and *Peanuts*.

But the thing that makes it the most fun is the sense of humor that we all share at Space Bass. There is a true sense of iconoclasm. Nothing is sacred in there. Everyone's false gods are up for attack, whether it be one's morality, political stance, or even a favorite style of music. Good natured barbs are constantly flying. I think a lot of the sarcastic wit of the work we do is generated from that.

**MK-H:** Another thing you did recently for Fox, actually for the Fox movie channel FX/M, was a live action short called *One Hand, Left*. One thing that struck me was how much of a feel of animation...that meticulous lighting and camera angles...leaked into the short. It seemed as if you applied a lot of what you do as an animator into the live action.

**CQ:** I think probably what you are getting at is the specialization of the short...I was telling the story of two hands from the perspective of one of them, the left hand. I had to reduce the frame to a very tight frame

because I didn't want the personality of the person portraying the two hands to overshadow the personality I was creating for these hands. It couldn't focus on the person to whom the hands were attached to. It was tough in a way because I had to create a film completely from insert shots...I had to create worlds that were only about a couple of feet wide.

**MK-H:** That's something you had a great deal of experience with going in to the piece.

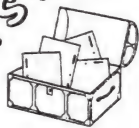
**CQ:** Well, probably...I guess that's true. On the good side, though, because we only



**Poker demonstrates the tragedy of acid reflux?**



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had that few feet to work in, it kept the budget for props down, we didn't have to dress a lot of sets, we didn't have vast spaces to light.

**MK-H:** And you wrote this entire piece...it wasn't as if it was something handed to you by other writers...this was something directly from you. How much of the *MadTV* stuff did you personally write and how much was from the writers?

**CQ:** There's a lot of really talented writers on *MadTV* and I enjoy and am honored to work with them. Usually what happens is that one of the writers comes up with an idea. In the case of *Raging Rudolph* it was Spencer and Mary. They'd bring it to Fax and Adam and I and pitch it to us, and then if we liked it they would go back and write it. I did a lot of work with Spencer and Mary...there were a few things that I'd throw in as well, for example, *Furious George* was based on one of my ideas. Another example of my participation would be *Gumboy and Poker*, the Gumby and Pokey spoof. I came to them and said "you know, we really have to do Gumby, so I would like to do something like Gumby walking into the Marquis de Sade's book *120 Days Of Sodom* or maybe the Blockheads spike his soda pop with acid and he goes on a trip." They took those two seeds

and wrote a story where Gumboy and Poker go into Gumboy's dad's Clayboy magazine and when he's at the Clayboy Mansion he gets dosed with acid and goes on a trip.

I think perhaps a lot of the ideas I personally come up with are a tad too extreme even for *MadTV*. I wanted to do something called *The Jeffrey Dollmer Story* which was a doll down in his basement with doll parts hanging from the ceiling and a refrigerator full of doll parts...they thought that was a little beyond what they were prepared for. But anyway, as time went on, I didn't get involved in the writing a lot because the animation kept me really, really busy. However I did manage to sneak a few ideas in...for example on *Clops II* I set up the Wallace and Gromit sequence. I'll write a few things in the process of the shooting...some refinements here and there.

**MK-H:** Where do you see your work going in the future? Certainly your success on *MadTV* has opened up a few doors?

**CQ:** I see my work going right into the toilet! [laughs] I really enjoy comedy, but I'd like my work to be taken on several different levels.

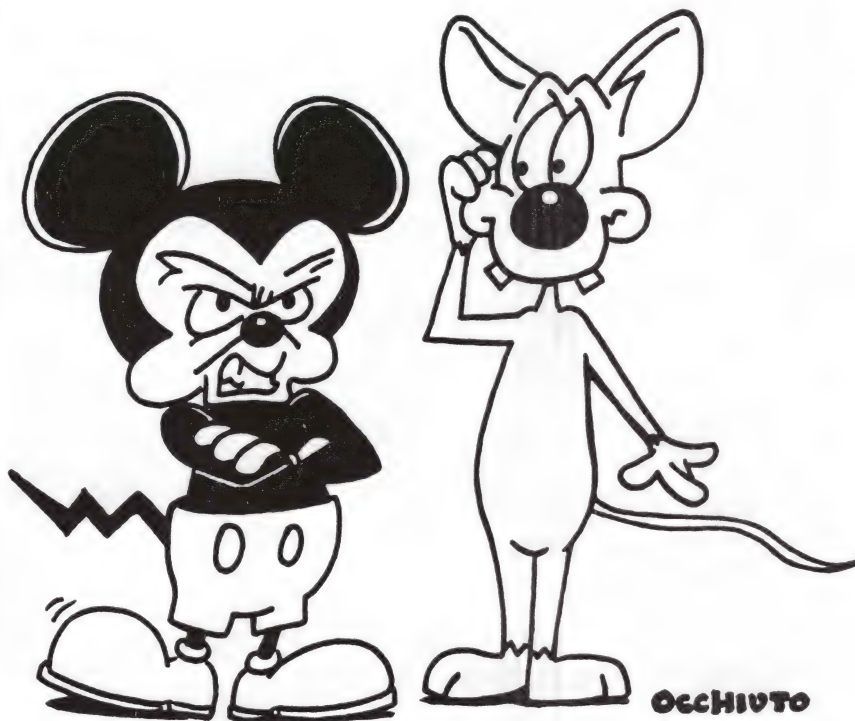
**MK-H:** Yeah, actually *One Hand, Left* had a very surprising ending...it wasn't the kind of ironic, existential thing I was expecting. It actually was kinda sweet.

**CQ:** The story is all about jealousy and betrayal, and I think that kind of story can't possibly be complete without some sort of redemption at the end. I mean, the stuff I do for *MadTV* and so forth is by and large kinda pointless comedy...and that's fun and I certainly enjoy that. I enjoy taking shots at pop culture. But there's another side to me that I like to express and that gets to come out in things like *One Hand, Left*.

As far as your last question...I would like to do more of both. Both the comedic stuff and stuff that perhaps says a little bit more. For example, I loved the movie *Groundhog Day* — this bizarre little film about karma and going ahead and doing something positive with your life. There's room for both.



Michelle Klein-Häss is an associate editor for *ToOn* magazine, Web mistress of Animation Nerd's Paradise and a computer geek. Michelle has written previously for ANiMATO!, including articles on Cheryl Chase and the late Fred Stuhr.



Pinky, I'm having second thoughts about my latest plan.





## Ottawa '98: More of the Same (Not That We Mind)

by Emru Townsend

**T**o us Montrealers, it sometimes seems inconceivable—that might say unforgivable!—that nearby Ottawa should have a major international animation festival, and we don't. As Montreal is one of Canada's film and animation capitals, and as a city that holds festivals of every stripe year-round, it's an indignity to have to travel to such an event every other year.

Okay, I'm kidding. Actually, we're quite happy to have to travel only two hours to get to the Ottawa International Animation Festival, unlike the other visitors from the United States, England, France, Japan and Estonia. And we even get to use our own money.

Having been to every festival since 1990, I'm not exactly a grizzled veteran, though some newcomers thought I was. That's because, in my experience, each festival changes only slightly from the one before, and most people who come to one fest make it to the next. In short, things quickly become familiar. This is why, despite arriving on Friday (the festival officially started on Wednesday, unofficially on Monday), I didn't feel the least bit disoriented or out of place. As always, the Ottawa festival mainly centered around three things: the workshops, the displays, and most important of all, the films.

The "New Tools of the Trade" workshop—one of only two I managed to attend—was packed. What I expected was an update on the state of the art of computer animation technologies. What I got was an information-packed session where Scott Dyer of Nelvana and David Plant of Silicon Graphics talked about the production of the new CGI show *Rolie Polie Olie*, with little stress on the flash of computer animation and more on the substance. After giving a brief summary of *Rolie Polie Olie*'s origins and showing an early test reel, Dyer touched on an interesting point: one often hears about the features of the different computer animation packages, but little is said about how to truly integrate comput-

ers into the animation production work flow. With that, he launched into a detailed account of their entire animation process—what software they use and when, how they manage overlapping production schedules, how organization techniques for drawn animation are adapted for their environment, and how they coordinate work between four studios in Toronto, Minneapolis, Paris, and Ho Chi Minh City. It still seems hard to believe that he was able to give us so much information and show us a 7-minute *Olie* clip in a little over half an hour. Saturday's "Traditional and Alternative Channels of Distribution" workshop featured Carol Beecher (proprietor of Fifteen Pound Pink Productions, and former Operations Coordinator of the Quickdraw Animation Society cooperative), Marv Newland (founder of International Rocketship, director of *Bambi Meets Godzilla*), Ron Diamond (founder of Acme Filmworks and president of Animation World Network), and Bill Plympton (director of *I Married a Strange Person*). A sizable number of students and budding animators were in attendance, several furiously scribbling notes as fast as the panelists could talk. Small wonder: like the "New Tools of the Trade" workshop, the information was flying fast and furious, although the panelists were quite relaxed and joking with one another. All four agreed that, regardless of the distribution method you may choose, it's important to self-promote by submitting your work to festivals. Ron Diamond also stressed just how careful you have to be with contracts, stressing the importance of not giving away your rights.

One curiosity: in a room with a significant representation of the younger, supposedly techno-savvy generation of animators, very few people thought to ask any questions about the Internet as a delivery of promotional vehicle. I didn't know what to make of it.

The displays were the usual mix of schools, studios, and product vendors; how-

ever, the first thing I noticed was that, much to my surprise, Disney had a fairly modest booth. (In '94, Disney Feature Animation's display was twice the size of an average booth; ditto Disney Television Animation in '96. Maybe this one was smaller as it was the still-new Disney Canada?) As usual, most of the booths were for studios (such as Disney, Nelvana, Pacific Data Images, Pixar, and smaller studios such as the local Dynomight); computer software and hardware companies (Softimage, Toon Boom, Crater); and schools (Seneca College, Sheridan). John Libbey & Company (who published a number of animation related books in the past few years) and ASIFA-Canada were also in attendance.

It was interesting to note how the atmosphere at the booths was different from previous festivals. At the last two festivals, the symptoms of the animation boom were fairly noticeable: if you so much as hinted at being an animator or animation student, business cards flew at you at alarming speeds, and everyone wanted to see your portfolio. Moreover, everyone was showing off how busy they were: you'd have been hard-pressed to find a booth that wasn't lined with pre-production artwork or showing rough footage or works in progress. For example, at Ottawa '94, Disney's booth had concept sketches from Mulan and the forthcoming *Tarzan*.

This year seemed more subdued. People were still interested in portfolios and pitches, but where were the displays of upcoming productions? PDI and DreamWorks showed clips from *Antz* and *Prince of Egypt*, but where were the *Shrek* pictures?

Of course, the real highlight of the festival is the films. There was the usual staggering amount: six competition screenings, each running at least 90 minutes, and about a dozen retrospectives, special screenings, and features. As usual, it's nearly

*Continued on page 126*



# SUE ROSIE

by Glenn Anton

She's touted as "Too cool to be twelve." Her looks are those epitomizing the typical Plain Jane, but she commands a personality as fiery as her hair. She's whimsical and outspoken, but especially imaginative. She possesses an alter ego which gives her the kind of advice that makes you wonder if it's a guardian angel or a wise-cracking devil.

She's Pepper Ann Pearson, animated star of *Disney's Pepper Ann*, which airs Saturday mornings on ABC. The spunky 12-year-old girl is described as no longer a kid but not yet a teenager. Albeit a bit awkward, she is nonetheless energetic and eternally optimistic.

The world of *Disney's Pepper Ann* is quirky, similar in some respects to *The Simpsons'* universe. Pepper Ann is the oldest child of a single parent, her mother Lydia. While she loves and misses her dad, Pepper Ann feels like she fits in, because divorce is so common among her classmates. Everything her mother says and does is embarrassing.

Pepper's little sister is Moose - short for Margaret Rose - a tough little kid with a voice cut on gravel. Moose is independent, self-sufficient and oblivious to what other people think.

The seventh grade at Hazelnut Middle School can be traumatic. Pepper isn't the most popular kid in class, but she has plenty of friends. There's Nicky (Pepper's lifelong friend), Milo (creatively anarchic, and one of Pepper's few male friends), Trinket (who has difficulty dealing with boys), Cissy (the clueless boy magnet), and Craig (an eighth grade version of James Dean or the young Marlon Brando).

The characters and setting of *Disney's Pepper Ann* is the offering of Sue Rose, series creator and executive producer. While Disney's *Pepper Ann* is the first TV series for Rose, she is not a rookie when it comes to animation. *Angel Anaconda*, a series Rose co-created with Joanna Ferrone, was recently picked up for development by Canada's Mainframe and Decode.



Sue Rose in black and white



# and...



*Fido Dido*, one of the many spokescartoons for 7-Up International, was created by Rose when, as Senior Art Director at J. Walter Thompson, doodled a drawing of the character on the back of a napkin. At her partner's insistence, Rose printed a batch of Fido T-shirts to give to friends. In no time at all, retailers were soon selling the shirts in their stores.

The spiky-haired stick figure character was licensed worldwide and became successful in Europe and Asia. It subsequently aired for three years on CBS as a Saturday morning interstitial and is still going strong in Europe and Asia. The possibility of a Fido Dido TV series is not out of the question.

Pepper Ann first appeared in a comic strip that Rose created for YM magazine in the early 90s. After the comic had appeared in the magazine for a few years, Rose created a concept for a Pepper Ann TV series. She showed the idea to Linda Simensky, who at the time was at Nickelodeon. Simensky was enthusiastically behind Rose and thought the concept would be perfect for television.

Explains Rose, one of the rising women in animation, "The Pepper Ann comic strip character looked very different than the television version. The original Pepper Ann was part of the Fido Dido family, with stick-up straight hair, no neck, though still wearing the exact same clothes as the television Pepper Ann. She was actually a little older in the comic strip. There were no other characters in the comic strip, except for her mother. It was usually Pepper Ann talking to herself, her alter ego."

Rose took various projects, including Pepper Ann, to Los Angeles in 1995 and pitched them to several networks. Disney made her an offer for Pepper Ann and, in 1996, gave her the green light to start on the first season of shows.

Considering that Disney, a company with a proven track record for children's entertainment, owns ABC, Rose had no second thoughts about which network would give Pepper Ann the best exposure.

"I couldn't be happier with my choice. The people who I was working with on the first day are the people I'm still working with today. I love working with these

people. The people that have been put together are the most talented people I've ever met. I've had a very good relationship with everyone, most of all with Nahnatchka Khan, my head writer and story editor (recently named co-producer)."

Since day one, Disney has given Rose a great deal of control in the decision-making department and in the show's direction. "I'm happy to say that I've been able to make the show I wanted to make. The story's have all remained intact. There's never been an issue that we've been told is not appropriate. I feel a responsibility towards my audience."

Rose sees TV as more than a source of mindless entertainment. It should be used as an educational tool. TV programs should be bringing something of value to the screen. "We have an opportunity to talk to millions of kids," she says. "And whether we had anything to do with FCC or not, we would use this time and responsibility wisely and carefully. I think it's an important show, having a girl lead, dealing with issues like divorce, first bra, first kiss. We're not specifically saying if your par-



ents are divorced, go out and do this. Yet, by merely showing a family like this on TV, we're saying divorce exists and don't feel like you're the only one."

Rose doesn't expect to ever run out of lessons. Even today - she's a bit older than 12 - she finds herself learning something every day. She doesn't fret at the idea of repeating a lesson, considering that several of them are important enough to require being reinforced in a child's education.

Her desire to produce a responsible show does not create the situation of sacrificing fun in order to teach a lesson. The show always has to be funny and entertain its audience. "It's a cartoon for God's sake," states Rose. "But I think there are things like kindness and caring and accepting people's differences, integration of races and nationalities. All of that is lesson learning. They're social lessons, which is what TV should portray. It should help build a strong foundation for a kid to go out and be open to learning lessons. It would be nice if kids were less involved in personal stuff, like pimples and crushes and dates, and more self-secure and well-rounded to get past that and be more concerned with doing well in school."

Rose feels that kids are looking for fun first, but that lessons are a vitally important part of one's childhood. That is why her desire was to create a show that was entertaining, but also contains some important messages involving themes universal to all kids - not just girls. These "cartoons with a conscience" balance humor and entertainment with plots that deliver modern-day issues in a responsible and realistic manner.

"Pepper's problems are the issues that kids deal with every day," she explains. "They're not earth-shattering catastrophes, but that's the way they seem to her."

Rose conferred with Diane Meehan, founder of the Archer School for Girls and FCC consultant for the series. Meehan offered her expertise on pro-social issues facing today's preteen girls and was active in the series' development process by supplying notes and ideas for every final script draft. Meehan also brought a group of 12 and 13-year-old girls from the school to meet with the Pepper Ann creative team. The youngsters not only brainstormed ideas, but they also read scripts from the series and viewed a rough cut episode in order to give feedback to the show's writers.

"I always think it's very important to be responsible with the opportunities I'm given," notes Rose. "And I think the most important message that you can give a kid



today is be yourself. Be who you are. Have faith in yourself - it's not necessary to follow the crowd. It was important to me, growing up, to be reminded - and to remind myself - that I was different and it was okay to be different. I was my own person and that's who Pepper Ann is."

A great deal of *Disney's Pepper Ann* is autobiographical. The name Pepper Ann came from Joanna Ferrone's (Rose's business partner) dog, Pepper. There is a slight physical resemblance, as well, between the cartoon star and her creator. The only noticeable difference is in hair color.

"I wish I had hair like Pepper Ann's," laugh's Rose. "I love red hair and I really like that big, wild, unruly hair. Red was a natural color to make her stand out. And the name Pepper fit very well with the color of her hair, but it wasn't calculated to be like that. I wear glasses - and did back

when I was 12. A lot of Pepper Ann's mannerisms and body language are similar to mine. Her stringbeany body was similar to mine, too."

Pepper Ann, much the same way Fido Dido has been, is a vehicle for Rose to express certain views. With the emergence of the series, however, Pepper Ann has evolved into more than a colorful two-dimensional character with her own TV series. She is a means of expression.

To Rose, the star of *Disney's Pepper Ann* is a person with fully-formed feelings and a personality all her own.

As Rose explains, "The most important aspect to Pepper Ann is that she's real. She's not perfect. She certainly doesn't look like the media-created females we've seen too much of in the 90s. She's a real person, fraught with the same insecurities and anxieties every other kid in the world



has growing up.”

Rose feels that what makes the series so special is that if a kid doesn't relate to Pepper Ann, there are other characters that he or she might bond with - all of which have distinct personalities and are as real as Pepper Ann.

“The characters are real and they're funny,” says Rose. “The fact that the show is based in reality allows for a lot of different people to relate to the characters. Kids today are very savvy and can recognize smart humor. That's very important to us. The show is relatable to a lot of people.”

“Once you create characters, give them personalities and life, what they say and do really depends on them. You have to be true to your character, to that personality. You can't put words in their mouth that wouldn't come from them. When you're doing a show on real characters that exist in a real world, you have to rely on truth.”

Rose admits that much of the series comes from her feelings and personal experiences, as well as those of the writing staff. Rose's mother owned a dress store similar to It's You, which Pepper Ann's mother manages in the series. Rose's dog is named Margaret Rose, the full name of Pepper Ann's little sister, Moose. Rose and Pepper Ann both have a little sister with a deep gravelly voice. Finally, Rose's aunt and uncle are named Pierson - a slight variation from Pearson. One exception is that, while Pepper Ann's parents are divorced, Rose's parents are married.

Growing up, Rose was always a lover of old cartoons like those created by Max Fleischer. It was specifically the lanky characters - Mickey Mouse, Olive Oyl,

Pink Panther, Krazy Kat and Ignatz Mouse - that caught her attention.

Rose also cites claymation - characters like Gumby, Pokey, Wallace and Grommit - as a big influence in her work. Not only do her backgrounds show a sense of claymation, but her characters' clothes move with a heavy look about them.

Her love of slapstick, both animation and live-action, has proven useful in her first TV series. Says Rose, “The Three Stooges was one of my favorite TV shows. That definitely influenced me in bits and pieces.”

Some of that slapstick flavor can be seen during the course of an episode, when Rose and the writers want to show viewers the world through Pepper Ann's eyes. During scenes where Pepper Ann escapes to her own world, the action gets wild. The show then switches into fantasy mode - or as Rose calls it, hyper reality.

“One thing about hyper reality is that it allows me to maintain a realism in the real world and then go completely broad in terms of animation during the hyper reality situations. That's when I can do a lot of goofy stuff.”

Rose doesn't want her show to be labeled as one-dimensional. It's a Saturday morning cartoon appealing to both children and adults on various levels.

“Kids spend a lot of time watching TV and not much time with their parents. Kids can benefit even more from TV if parents watch the programs with them. We're presenting a show with adult characters that parents can relate to, as well as topics like the relationship between Pepper Ann and her mother. As a result, we've received lots

of positive feedback from parents.”

As long as the feedback remains positive, Rose feels that her show is achieving its goal of being a strong educational tool for children. She remains confident that the show, and specifically its star, can teach children many important lessons in life.

“Pepper Ann is a strong female role model for girls and boys. Not only is she a girl, she's a kid - a typical kid. She has the kind of energy and enthusiasm that's typical of a 12-year-old. Pepper Ann is not satisfied with the answer of ‘just because.’ She has to find out things for herself and experience things on her own.”

*Disney's Pepper Ann* is female-oriented, but Rose is quick to point out that it's not a series created by girls solely for girls. She notes that, according to ratings and focus testing, *Disney's Pepper Ann* has a 60/40 percentage for girls/boys who watch the series.

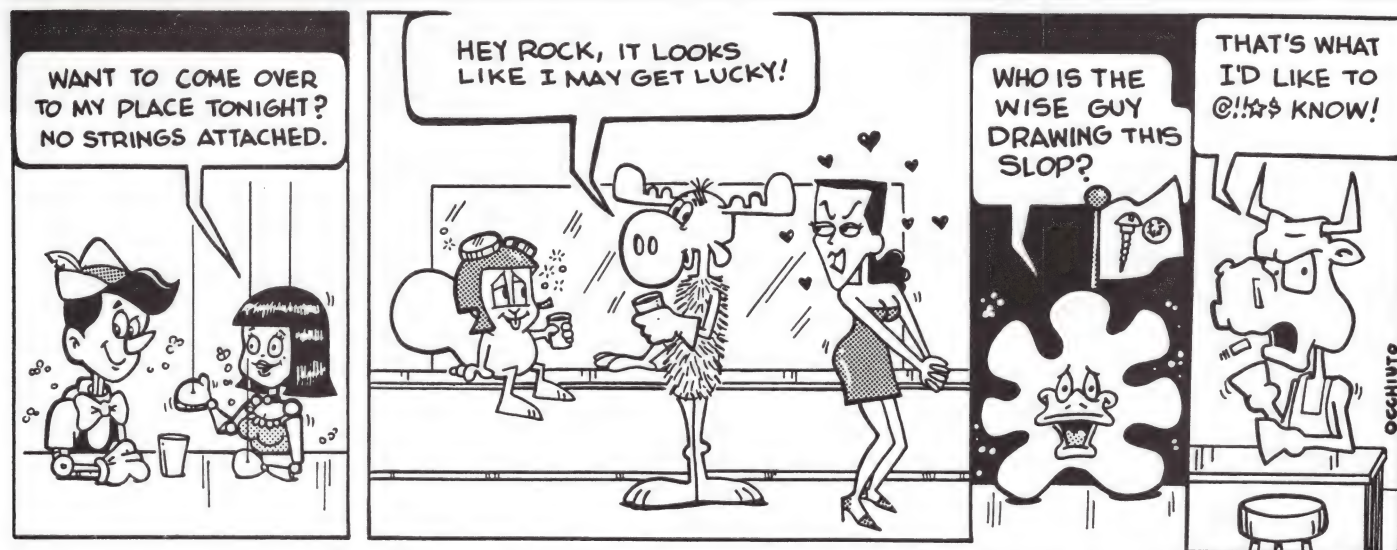
“There are lots of men working on the show,” she insists. “We cover kid issues, not just girl issues. Girls deserve a show where they have more presence, but I think there's something for everyone in this show. I think it's extremely important for boys to have strong female role models. It's pro-girl, not anti-guy.”

In short, it's pro-kid.



## Waldorf's Toon Tavern

Created by Mark Hurley  
Guest Artist: John Occhiuto





# アニメ ANIME REVIEWS

## Kiki's Delivery Service

1989 Eiko Kadono/Nibariki/Tokuma  
Shoten Publishing Company LTD  
Distributed by Buena Vista Home  
Entertainment  
Color/105 min.

I hate to sound like I am getting way ahead of myself, but why did it take nearly ten years for this film to get a decent screening in this country? Is it because Japanese animation has a rather clandestine fan base, and thus anything deemed to be attached to it becomes suspect? Whatever the reason, it is high-time the works of Hayao Miyazaki are finally getting their chance to be seen in this hemisphere. The deal Disney made to distribute his films gives us all a chance to see that wonderfully-inspired animation has been produced in Japan over the years, and that Disney hasn't owned a monopoly on successful animated features.

Actually, *Kiki's Delivery Service* (or *Majo no Takkyubin—The Witch's Delivery Service*) is a children's story written by one Eiko Kadono, and from what I've read it has won a number of awards. It's the story of a 13-year-old witch (Kiki) who decides that now is the time she strikes out on her own so she can perform witchly duties as part of her witches' training. The problem is, the only thing she can do is fly on a broom, and she doesn't do that particularly well either. She takes what she can—including her little black cat Jiji—and eventually finds a beautiful city on the ocean where she hopes to make a name for herself.

Things do not begin well for Kiki, and even though she finds supportive friends in a baker named Mrs. Osono and a boy named Tombo, she still finds it difficult to get any business as a delivery service—

mostly because of her inexperience and naiveté. She is also very self-conscious of her appearance (she is only allowed to wear black while she's in training), and is embarrassed when she is around her peers.

As hard as she tries, nothing seems to work out, and when she seemingly loses her ability to fly, she despairs that she will never amount to anything, and that she is a failure. However, she learns from an artist friend named Ursula that inspiration to do great things just doesn't always come when you want it to. If fighting doesn't work, then you need to put it off until the inspiration returns. Really, the story is a delving



into the human soul, and its message is that we should never take what gifts we have for granted. It also tells us the value of true friends.

So, where is the evil character who wishes to defeat Kiki at every turn? Well, unlike most animated tales, this one doesn't really have an identifiable antagonist. Kiki must overcome her own shortcomings, and in the end, she must also show everyone that she can come through when it truly counts. I love this movie. It doesn't browbeat you with lots of zany action and outlandish situations (apart from a little girl

flying on a broom). *Kiki's Delivery Service* is about real people handling situations the way people do. It is also a wonderfully laid out and animated film.

Having had already seen this film prior to the Buena Vista release, I must admit that I had misgivings regarding how they would handle the English dubbing. For the most part I feel the dubbing was incredibly well-handled, and even much of the lip-synching was on the mark. If I have any complaints about it, it would be that the dubbing was a bit excessive. They could have left a lot of the vocalizations out in my opinion. Also, it is a shame that the original songs are removed in favor of other compositions. Perhaps it would have been too difficult to re-record the songs in English, but I respect the original composer, Jo Hisaishi an awful lot, and it seems he gets snubbed with the overall soundtrack.

However, when I think that most people will be discovering *Kiki's Delivery Service* and other films directed by Hayao Miyazaki for the first time, the problems I see with this dub aren't going to matter with these people. So far it has been warmly received in film festivals in Seattle and Orlando, and practically all audience reactions and reviews have been highly positive. I have high hopes for Kiki making a good account for herself here in America. Perhaps this animation will whet the appetites of American audiences for more films like this.

I certainly hope so. --John Beam



## Blue Seed, Volumes 12 & 13

© 1995 Yuzo Takada

A.D. Vision Films Release

60 minutes each,

VHS, hi-fi, surround sound

Contains violence and mature situations

When we last left this series, Momiji's protector, Kusanagi has been defeated by the diabolical Murakumo, and the earth is coming closer to being overwhelmed by the Aragami. However, Momiji's twin sister Kaede mysteriously revives him. I say 'mysteriously' simply because Kaede isn't on her sister's side of the ledger. However, she's not exactly on Murakumo's side either.

Meanwhile, the hours are being counted down for when a solar eclipse will occur, and when this happens, it has been foretold that the Aragami will spread their seeds throughout Japan to make *everything* green (people included—it isn't a pretty sight, I assure you!). As Murakumo attempts to lead his Aragami in the destruction of Japan, his monstrous hoard are being absorbed by the giant plants that have sprung up throughout the country! Has Kaede betrayed him?

And while this is happening, Momiji and the TAC are getting ready for a final showdown to stop Murakumo, Kaede, and Susano-Oh, the appointed "god" that will turn the Earth green once again. Will Momiji and her friends be successful in their attempt, will she truly become the human sacrifice whose blood is the only matter that will seal the Aragami forever, or will humanity perish?

I really want to like this series, and it certainly does have its moments. For a television production, it definitely beats a wide majority of the made-for-TV animation produced in this country. Also, there are elements to the story that are appealing. However, I'm simply not well-versed enough in the lore and mythology of Japan to truly grasp the significance of *Blue Seed*. In other words, it confused me. Lots of cool stuff goes on, but a lot of the time I didn't understand *why* the cool stuff was going on! But if there is one thing I liked about the conclusion, it's that the characters seemed to resolve a lot of the conflict between them. They are at each other's throats quite a bit throughout this series.

Finally, I just wanted to put in a plug for the post-show bits at the end of each *Blue Seed* volume, called *Otake Theater*. These run perhaps 5 minutes (at the most), and are for the most part parodies of the characters and situations in the series. Now, the series confused me, but this stuff *really* confused

me. Yet, it is so off-the-wall and goofy, I can't help but like it. I love how the Japanese will show that in spite of the way they present a serious program, they can show that they don't take themselves too seriously. In my opinion, the short *Otake Theater* episodes are enough to get the whole volumes, just to watch them.

--John Beam

## (Go Nagai's) New Cutey Honey

Volume 1 (four volumes so far)

A.D. Vision Films Release

60 minutes English dubbed

Contains animated nudity, violence and adult situations.



The last several years have brought numerous recreations of American TV shows from decades past, and the Japanese home video market has followed a similar trend.

Enter *Cutey Honey*, an old TV favorite in Japan, revamped for a 90's return. The creator of the original version, Go Nagai, seems to have given this project his blessing, although it doesn't appear he was directly involved. I've never seen the original series, but this new incarnation supposedly recaptures the spirit of its predecessor, if the promotional hype session featured at the end of the tape is to be believed.

The first of two episodes in this volume

opens in an unidentified, vaguely European city, suffering under the yoke of a powerful group of oppressive criminals. An adolescent boy, Chokkei, is on his way to attend a peace rally by the virtuous Mayor Light when he is almost run over by his own parents, who are being chased after an unsuccessful bank robbery. Chokkei muses via narration that crime has become so ingrained in their society that even the most virtuous person must dabble in it occasionally.

When Mayor Light's plea for lawfulness is subjected to attack by a criminal gang, a feisty cybernetic old man (presumably a character from the original series) leaps from out of the blue and engages the n'er-do-wells in battle. It so happens this crazed geezer is Chokkei's grandfather Danbei, who has been missing for years. During the melee, an evil supernatural being, Dolmeck, appears from out of nowhere and ruins everyone's day (including the criminals'). As Dolmeck announces his intent to rule the city, Danbei somehow detects something special about the mayor's demure secretary, Honey Chan. In an energetic, comically over-the-top fashion, he claims this young woman is actually a long-lost superhero. This seems to be news to Honey, but as the battle rages on she somehow unleashes her hidden abilities to become the glib, dangerous and oh-so-perky Cutey Honey.

As we discover in this and subsequent battles, Cutey can "flash" herself into several different incarnations, each providing her with various skills, weapons, costumes and hair styles. In the tradition of similar anime transformations (Devil Hunter Yohko comes to mind), her outfit is magically removed and replaced before our eyes, which provides languishing views of her bountiful form—"flash", indeed!

The second episode in this volume pits Cutey against a crazed witch of some sort with pasties made from diamonds. This foe enjoys seeking out beautiful young women and freezing them into statues for her gallery of once-living nudes. ("Could she be a thespian?" Chokkei wonders.) Cutey debuts her "dominatrix" persona here, and they both engage in enough innuendo to make even James Bond blush.

What is unclear to me, but what might be known by fans of the old show, is the connection Danbei has to Cutey. The old man maintains a sort of shrine that seems to be the key to her power, for instance. Youngster Chokkei is ignorant of the Cutey legend at first but gradually learns a little about who she is and, thanks to the "flashes", a whole lot more about her anatomy. Hints



of a potential relationship between the two is a bit puzzling considering their age difference, but it's dangerous to make assumptions or judgments about the product of another culture, especially when it comes to anime. To add to the confusion, the cover box and other material refers to *Cutey* as an android, but if that was mentioned in these episodes I guess I missed it.

But overanalysis of a show like this is inappropriate. We aren't told the origins or goals of the evil organization, but who cares? We don't know why their supernatural minions seem to consist mainly of scantily-clad buxom women, but so what? *Cutey Honey* is about half-nekkid babes with superpowers flinging weapons and double-entendres while kicking serious butt. It doesn't take itself seriously, and if the viewers try to anyway they have their work cut out for them. The violence isn't graphic (not for anime, anyway) and despite the nudity there really aren't many "sexual situations". Sure, there's T&A galore, but the only hint of actual sex is one instance of the "fade to black" variety. This is just "harmless" (ahem) titillation. And it has a catchy theme song!

A subtitled version of this tape was released a few years ago in a hard plastic cover box, but this English-dubbed version was recently issued in a standard cardboard slipcover with more vibrant, sexy artwork. There's nothing epic, or deep, or thought-provoking about this. This isn't family fare like Miyazaki's work, and neither is it hard-core adult material like the numerous "naughty tentacle" titles. Hell, it isn't even Art. But if you're looking for some escapist, somewhat naughty fun that's decently animated, then this is the tape for you. Turn off your brain and enjoy this guilty pleasure. *Honey flash!*

### Dirty Pair Flash

Mission 2: Act 1

90 minutes (three episodes)

Mission 2: Act 2

60 minutes (two episodes)

A.D. Vision Films Release

Contains some violence and very brief nudity

I'm not sure why the word "flash" is (seemingly) so popular in recent anime, but this series is another recreation of an old favorite. After their debut in a brief movie-within-a-movie, (*Crusher Joe*), the "Lovely Angels" Kei and Yuri starred in their own TV series and several theatrical films during the 1980s. The characters became so popular that, upon seeing a

character redesign in one of the movies, obsessed fanboy "otakus" became so enraged that the changes were reversed for the next feature.

I'm not sure what the fan reaction was this time, but the Angels have undergone a much more dramatic transformation for this series of OAV's from 1994, based on a series of novels by Hakura Takachicho. The character designs have more of a manga influence; they look younger, simpler, more streamlined and bit more comedically stylized. Anime fans unfamiliar with these particular characters would have no prob-



lem dating the 80s look of the originals, and I'm sure future historians will have as little difficulty plopping the new designs smack dab in the middle of the 90s.

The change has affected the storytelling as well: whereas the original versions were action-dramas laced with comedy, these new ones are comedies laced with action. The tone is lighter and a little more "wacky". Still, the premise is the same: Kei and Yuri are "trouble consultants" of a future century under the employ of the WFWA (World Welfare Work Association), always ready for bizarre and dangerous assignments that take them all over the galaxy.

Their current mission: bodyguard a computer genius, Toma, as he purges a virus from a theme park's central computer. This isn't just any theme park: this is Worlds World, a planet being engineered to duplicate 20th Century Earth. The first portion of the park to open for the public duplicates Japan, naturally.

It might seem odd that a sci-fi series set in the distant future would pick a contemporary locale as its setting, and odd it certainly is: it's a gimmick one would expect a live-action program to use as a cost-cutting measure. But the premise mixes the two elements effectively, placing the characters in a setting familiar to their audience while utilizing various futuristic concepts like Toma's advanced computer system or the androids that help operate the theme park.

The first episode is action-packed, following Toma's attempt to eradicate the computer virus while Kei and Yuri keep him safe from several assassination attempts. It seems a competitor to Worlds World would very much like to see the park fail, and Toma is the only person in their way.

Once they rid themselves of the enemy agent, the Lovely Angels find their services unneeded during the remaining weeks of Toma's meticulous scrubbing of the entire computer system. So it's vacation time!

The middle three episodes have very little to do with World's World, the virus or corporate espionage. Instead, these unrelated tales are shoehorned into the framework of the current mission as self-contained asides. Episode two has Kei and Yuri staying in a girls' school dormitory that seems to be haunted (!), episode three involves a misadventure with a fellow WFWA troubleshooter, and in the fourth story, Toma is love-stricken by a young woman who works at a florist shop. So much for a story arc!

It isn't until the fifth and final episode that we learn that an enemy agent, in the form of a virtual computer entity, still resides in the computer system and must be sought out and eliminated. With our heroes avoiding multiple robotic assassins and facing an android vessel of the entity itself, this segment is full of engaging chase sequences and lots of action.

Overall the series is a lot of fun and the animation is well done. I look forward to seeing more of the Dirty Pair, but I hope future "missions" avoid the hodgepodge anthology-like nature of this collection of episodes and instead present a more flowing storyline. --John Beam



**Gunbuster**  
Volumes 1-3  
© 1988,1990 Victor/GAINAX/B.M.D.  
Manga Video Release  
60 minutes, VHS, Color, Hi-Fi Stereo  
Contains violence, adult situations, and  
nudity.

Eight years before *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, another space epic was forged by the creative team at GAINAX, one which would help set the stage for other lucrative projects after they burst on the scene with the classic film - *The Wings of Honneamise*. This title was *Top-o-Nerae!* ("Aim for the Top!") - *Gunbuster*, one that set GAINAX off to even bigger and better things.

This six-part series is about Noriko Takaya, who lives to become a soldier in the mold of her father, an admiral who was killed in battle against space aliens. Throughout this journey, she must fight against her own shortcomings, rivalry among her own side, and her reliance on others before she can even begin to fight the forces that threaten the future of all mankind. On the sidelines is "Coach" Ota, a survivor of the initial battle with the aliens, who sees in Noriko the spirit and ability to pilot the most powerful weapon ever conceived: the "Bustermachine." When the BM1 and BM2 combine, they form "Gunbuster," a robot with more gadgets and weapons than you can imagine!

As Noriko and her "Big Sister" Kasumi team up to pilot this monstrosity, more and more of the deadly aliens gather in an attempt to overwhelm Earth's defenses. This all culminates with the creation of the "Bustermachine 3," a craft so enormous that it dwarfs some planets! This is the "Black Hole Bomb" that will cause such a vortex it will envelop the entire galaxy of the enemy, and thus save the earth from sure annihilation. Things do not go exactly as planned, though. The aliens are keen to what is going on, and they pull a blitz to destroy the BM3 before it can be detonated. Literally billions of the aliens have gathered, but the earth forces are holding them off, giving the BM3 time ready itself for the explosion. However, the battle has cause too much damage to the BM3 for it to get a chain reaction in its enormous mass. Noriko knows what she must do, but will her plan succeed, or will she, her comrades, and all mankind perish?

I will not hide my enthusiasm for this series. It is one of the titles that really hooked me to liking animation from Japan some six years ago. It has everything going for it: outstanding animation, wonderful



character designs, a great story (filled with some off-the-wall, but interesting science fiction concepts), and dramatic character interaction. This isn't exactly what I would call your typical "Giant Robot" show. The actions in battle do not even get rolling until the end of episode 4 in volume 2. However, Volume 3 is totally action-packed, and we finally get to see what the Gunbuster is really capable of. Still, it is the drama in *Gunbuster* that really grabs me. If you are susceptible of being rather emotional while viewing films, keep a box of Kleenex handy. You'll need it!

--John Beam

**Neon Genesis Evangelion 0:9-0:11**

© 1996 GAINAX  
A.D. Vision Films Release  
60 minutes each, VHS, hi-fi,  
surround sound  
Contains violence and adult situations

Since the beginning of events in *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, times have been critical. Nine volumes and eighteen episodes later, things have gotten practically out of control, and the future of mankind is in doubt. An entire NERV base mysteriously disappears (along with a new model Eva), and NERV scrambles to find a new pilot to man the 03 unit. The "fourth child" is found, but the revelation of who it is surprises and shocks everyone (pilot included). What indeed shocks is when the 03 goes

completely berserk during a simple practice-run, and it easily takes out the 00 and 02 Eva units when they try to stop it. Now it is up to Shinji, who's 01 is known to go out of control itself. He battles with thoughts of having to stop an Eva which is holding a human life inside it, while he is being ordered to treat it as an Angel threat (in other words, he is to terminate it).

Being incapable of killing another person, his father pulls the plug of any control Shinji has on his Eva, and the 01 unit completely destroys the 03, and apparently kills the pilot. Following these events, Shinji refuses to do any more of NERV's bidding, and decides to go on his way. The fate of the Earth is of no consequence to him if he is to be asked to kill other people (up to this point, it is a perfectly understandable reaction from a 14-year-old boy). However, a new Angel threat arises, and this one rolls through like a juggernaut past Asuka's 02 and Rei's 00 Evas as if they weren't there. As it makes its way through to NERV headquarters, Shinji comes back with the 01, just as the Angel is about to blast everyone. The 01 is nearly successful, but the power reserves of his Eva are drained, and the Angel begins to take the 01 apart. As this is happening, and while Shinji frantically tries to get the Eva to move, the 01 comes to life and effortlessly smashes the Angel; the power within it being almost beyond imagination. However, out of control, the 01 becomes an enormous beast, and reveals its true nature. NERV is able to regain the 01, but Shinji is now trapped inside, and is apparently become ONE with the 01!

With the loss of the NERV Branch 2 headquarters and the near-destruction of three invaluable Evas, SEELE, the leash which holds rein on NERV wants some answers. What is going on with the human implementation experiments? What does the EVAs have to do with this? Why are the Angels attacking Earth? And to top it all off, what is Gendo Ikari's agenda in all of it? In all of the questions, answers are becoming clear, and it begins to show that perhaps it is all a work towards the destruction of life on Earth as we know it. Meanwhile, Asuka's ability to operate her 02 unit is becoming negligible, and she loses confidence. A new Angel threat arises in the meantime, and it seems that this one uses its ability to probe the human psyche as its primary weapon. It's victim is Asuka, and it seems as though this attack destroys any ability she may have had left after being easily defeated in the last two attacks. With the angel orbiting the Earth well out of range of any earthly weapons,





Evangelion pilot Rei Ayanami

how can they stop it?

Things are beginning to wind down with this series. *Neon Genesis Evangelion* is hyped as the "most controversial anime of our time," and I can understand why. There are other anime on the market that contains equally shocking and provocative material (usually of a pornographic nature); however, this series is far more intellectual in its approach, and it constantly keeps us asking "what's *really* going on here?" It is becoming apparent that people within the NERV organization aren't being forthcoming with their underlings (especially the children), and that they have delusions of Godhood themselves. Perhaps the "Angel attacks" are merely the heavenly response to what will ultimately destroy all there is. We'll find out when I review the final episodes of *Neon Genesis Evangelion* in the next issue of *ANiMATO!*.

### KEY The Metal Idol

Volumes 1-2

© 1994 Hiroaki Sato/Pony Canyon

Viz Video Release

Volume 1 80 minutes

Volume 2-5 60 minutes

VHS digital, hi-fi stereo

Contains violence, coarse language, nudity, and adult situations

A kindly elderly gentleman constructs a progeny with the hope that it will become truly human upon specific conditions placed upon the construct. Sound familiar? Of course there's Pinocchio and Data from *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (the legendary Golem and Frankenstein's Monster might also fall into this category). *KEY The Metal Idol* comes as close to this typical story line as any, with a few twists added.

Key appears to live the same sort of life as "her" peers. She goes to school, and has a family life. She even "grows" by having her consciousness transferred from time to time into more mature android bodies. She deeply wants to be human, but when her "father" mysteriously dies, her hopes of doing so are seemingly quashed, for how can she continue to operate without his assistance, and her power source will be drained soon. However, she is left with an audio will, stating that if she can become friends with 30,000 people, she will become a flesh-and-blood human being. Upon hearing this, Key ventures to Tokyo to become friends with as many people as she can before her functions cease.

The problem is, Key has never learned the finer points of interpersonal relationships, and begins to stumble into the wrong crowd (kind of like Honest John and Finnie from *Pinocchio*). However, she says "no" to taking her clothes off for the pornographers (good girl!), and finds an old friend from home named Sakura. Through a number of circumstances, Key figures that the way to become friends with a large number of people, she needs to become popular, and comes up with the idea to emulate an "idol" singer named Miho Utsuse. Meanwhile, there is Ajo Heavy Industries, which manufactures deadly android weaponry (they also happen to be tied to Ms. Miho's successful singing tour). Ajo is aware of Key's existence, and they are seeking her out, probably in order to find out how her systems can operate without any human guidance (since the Ajo machines have been known to run amok). With Key being drawn to become like Miho, is she about to walk into the hands of these fiends?

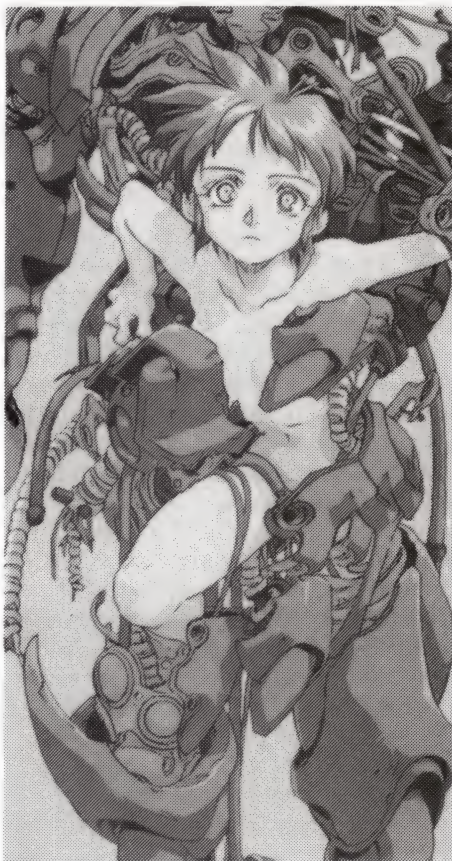
I have mixed feelings about this title. I

like the story and the Key character. Most of the time she is emotionless, with a doll-like, blank expression on her face. However, there are a few times when circumstances cause her to awaken to a more human consciousness, little by little. I also think the animation is very good from time to time. Yet, there just seems to be an anemic quality to this. The story just doesn't seem to move along very well. I sense that there are too many different things going on, and all the different plots seem to be sparring for equal time. If I were to describe everything that goes on in these five episodes, it would require more space than I would even consider writing about. I've got a number of episodes to go with this series; though, so it is too early to tell what my final verdict will be on *KEY The Metal Idol*. Stay tuned.

### KEY The Metal Idol

Volumes 3-5

Key, our little android girl is still desperate to find 30,000 friends, for if she can do so, her "grandfather" has told her that she'll become human. The problem is, she is seemingly devoid of any emotions or personality whatsoever. She also has a hard time communicating to people the fact that she really is a robot, and not just a weird little girl.





So far, all seems rather pointless as far as finding "friends." The one person she's been able to count on, *Sakura*, has lost all patience with Key, and has shut her out of her apartment. Without a place to go, she is taken in by a bizarre cult, lead by *Prince Snake-eye*. He is convinced Key is a messenger from his god, and when she apparently causes a miracle by taking away a child's deadly illness, he and his mind-numbed followers are convinced that she's an angel. Her mysterious guardian rescues Key (both from this cult and a monstrous killer known only as D), but she's definitely not any nearer to finding folks who will be her friend.

Sakura finally gets over her differences with Key, and she openly tries to help her get into show business. She is laboring under the misconception that Key is an odd girl, but she feels responsible for helping her out. This plan seems impossible, simply because Key cannot act, sing, or move gracefully. In fact, she simply stands still, looking forlorn during all her rehearsals, much to the astonishment of the judges. However, one such judge, Hikaru Tsurugi, is intent upon making her one of his "discoveries." What could this guy be thinking? Does he really believe she has inherent talent, or does he have some evil intent?

Also, as this is going on, Mr. Snake-eye and his loony followers are keeping tabs on "their" messenger from the snake god.

And there's more: a diabolical president of a music com is conducting medical experiments in making a "metal idol" of his own a reality; out of control robots that are often running amok, and the question of who exactly is Key, and how can she become a human being by making 30,000 friends? There certainly are times when I wonder what the point of this story is.

I mean, it's supposed to be about this Pinocchio-like little character who definitely yearns to become human, but she is so terribly nondescript and uninteresting most of the time. Many other things are going on in these videos, but why should I care if the main protagonist does not seem to care herself? Yet, for some reason I do care. Key somehow manages to convey some semblance of humanity, and when she is forced into a tight situation, she truly shows signs that there is a real girl underneath that metal exterior.

If there is one thing I think is terribly obvious, it is that I believe this story would have been much better had it been filmed with live actors rather than animating it. I believe the story would move along much better in live settings with live actors than with the limited use of motion and visuals

in these videos. I like Key and this story, but sometimes it gets slow, and that works against the medium. Three more volumes are left in this series, and I will get through them all in the next issue of ANiMATO!.

--John Beam

### Ellicia

Parts 3 & 4

© 1993 JVC/JAM Creation/J. C. Staff

A.D. Vision Films Release

50 minutes each, VHS, hi-fi, S/S

Contains violence and strong language

As we looked at this short series last time, Eira (a female pirate) is identified as "the chosen one" to take possession of Ellicia: The Ship of God. With this, she will do battle with the evil Megaronian Empire and avenge the destruction of her people in Eijia. However, before Ellicia is capable of hitting the Megaronian's with all its capabilities, three seals need to be removed, and so it will be able to submerge, fly, and fire photon-type torpedoes.

In the meantime, the Megaronian military leader Phelkis has his own agenda for world conquest, and secretly builds his own monstrous ship in order to bring his hopes to fruition. At every turn, Eira must face off enemy forces in her attempt to remove all the holy seals from Ellicia, and is nearly beaten by Phelkis. But what other forces are at work in frustrating both Eira and Phelkis? It appears that rather than Ellicia being an object of humanity's salvation, it may be the manifestation of evil in the hands of a demon from hell itself. When this demon possesses Eira's brother, the crown prince of her people, how can she save humanity and not kill her own flesh-and-blood?

I like this series, in spite of the obvious elements that are taken from other animes and stories. Anyone can do a rip-off and do a rotten job of it; however, the makers of Ellicia manage to create characters with lots of appeal, and the events in it are handled with appropriate pacing and coherency. I also like the original elements, such as the designs of the machines, architecture, and fashions. I'm a little bummed by the final sequence of events in the last episode, but other than that, I would recommend it to mature adults, since there is quite a bit of heavy drama and bloodshed in *Ellicia*.

One final comment about an additional bonus in *Ellicia 4*. A. D. Vision concludes the video with a pencil test portfolio for a few of the head animators at the end of the closing credits, so be sure not to miss this. This sort of thing is not uncommon with

many of A. D. Vision's videos (concluding videos with original artwork and character models), which has endeared them with me, since I enjoy this sort of thing.

--John Beam



Ranma

© 1999 Rumiko Takahashi/Shogakukan

### Ranma (Hard Battle): Mirror, Mirror

© 1997 Rumiko Takahashi/Shogakukan

Viz Video Release

52 minutes, VHS digital, hi-fi stereo

Contains animated violence and adult situations

Ranma Saotome and his father Genma have been training for ten years in the "Anything-Goes School of Martial Arts," and it is all beginning to culminate in a series of training sites in China. One of them is called "Jusenkyo" ("Not very impressive!"); however, this place has a tragic history: it is filled with hundreds of cursed springs, and whoever falls into one of them will become whoever or whatever has drowned in it. Well, Genma falls into the "Spring of Drowned Panda," upon which he causes Ranma to fall into the



"Spring of Drowned Girl." So, now whenever either of them gets splashed with cold water, they turn into their respective alter egos (fortunately, warm/hot water brings them back to their original forms).

Now, this is only the beginning of Ranma's problems. Seems that Genma promised his good friend Soun Tendo that Ranma would marry one of his three daughters (of course without telling Ranma!), and upon finding out about Ranma's malady, the older two decide he's perfect for Akane Tendo, who's probably the biggest boy-hater on the planet (the fact that Ranma is a girl part of the time doesn't put him in good with her either—he's just more of a pervert than average now)! With this in mind, let's look at the episodes in this particular volume, shall we?

In *Ukyo's Skirt! The Great Girly-Girl Gambet*, Ranma is faced with one of his many troubles; the fact that so many girls are crazy about him. One of them is Ukyo, who seems to also be betrothed to Ranma by yet another arrangement! She wishes that Ranma would pay attention to her instead of just her cooking, so she decides to become more feminine and wear dresses or a change instead of her traditional okonomiyaki-making garb (like everyone else in Ranma, Ukyo is a skilled martial-artist, her specialty being that of clobbering her opponents with spatulas!). Her attempts to grab Ranma this way doesn't set well with her rivals Kodachi, Shampoo, and even Akane. As with everything else in this series, a competition develops between these four to see who can be the best cook for Ranma. Does Akane have a chance—seeing how she's probably the worst cook in Japan (if not the whole world!)? Then, in *Ranma Goes to Jusenkyo at Last*, Ranma, Genma, and their master Happosai use a magic mirror to travel to China to their forementioned past in order to prevent the events from happening that caused them to become...well...less than men. Gee, if they succeed, then what will become of this huge series? Stop dead in its tracks? And what about the vision Ranma sees in the future of Akane and her children?!! This episode is too strange to pass up.

This is indeed a very strange, yet funny series. From the fertile mind of Rumiko Takahashi (based on her comic series of the same name), it is filled with numerous "romantic"-triangle possibilities: the guy likes girl-Ranma but wants to kill boy-Ranma, and so on, and so on, and so on... Problem is, Ranma is a bit distracted by his "problem" to notice advances from anybody, regardless of their sex (not to men-

tion the fact that every week it seems somebody comes to town who is dead-set on beating the living daylight out of him!). Personally, this isn't my favorite Takahashi tale, but it seems to have something for everybody. Just be forewarned that people get knocked around in this (not much different from the sort of violence in a Warner Brothers cartoon), and sometimes a little nudity.

--John Beam



### Rail of the Star

© TV Tokyo/JVC

A. D. Vision Films Release

80 minutes, VHS, hi-fi, s/s

Contains scenes which may be too intense for children

*Rail of the Star* is about life in Korea during the Second World War, not exactly a place you think about as being associated with that period in history. However, if you haven't read up on the subject, you will find with this story that the Korean peninsula was a Japanese province, and a number of events occur there which led up to the bloody conflict in Korea just a few years after WWII. You won't exactly learn much about what these events are with this story, but it may be a good primer for people who would like to know how life was like there during the Japanese occupation.

This story is mainly about a little girl named Chitose (or, most of the time "Chiko"), who's father runs a business in northern Korea. War does not actually come

to their part of the world, but it's effects are felt through shortages in food and medicine. Soon, Chiko's father is drafted in the army, but even then he returns home when his health is poor. Only when her little sister contracts tuberculosis and dies do we get any sense of loss and tragedy in this story.

However, the main story is not so much about life during the war, but rather the events after the war is over. Chiko and her family have been relatively untouched by the ravages of war, but when the Russian army arrives (and the fledgling Communist government gets started), northern Korea is the last place someone who's Japanese wants to be. The story then becomes a trek for many Japanese who must find a way to the south before it becomes impossible for them to do so. How can so many families, many with young children and grandparents make the over-100 mile trek to safety (to the U.S.-occupied territory)?

I found the frank discussion of events and circumstances in *Rail of the Star* rather surprising. The Japanese in Korea treat the native Koreans practically as slaves, and those who refuse to accept the ways of the Japanese are handled brutally. Not only do we see the war from the eyes of a Japanese child, but we also see it from the perspective of the Korean children who had to endure much as subjects to the Japanese. Coming from a Japanese production, I was just a bit taken aback by the straight-forward honesty of this film.

However, there wasn't really a lot of drama that drove this story. It is based on a novel by Chitose Kobayashi (no doubt from her own life experiences during the war), and I'm sure it is a true illustration of events recounted in her story. But I just did not feel that there was a lot to get worked up about it. Other films that tell about wartime in Japan—such as *Grave of the Fireflies* and *Barefoot Gen*—give a much deeper sense of urgency, tragedy, and desperation. *Rail of the Star* is just too light a tale to really grab you. Whether this is the fault of the film-makers, or the novel itself isn't handled very dramatically, I can't say.

I do not want to put this film down, though. It should get kudos for its depiction of a time that I'm sure most Japanese would rather not think about, and perhaps it would also shine a bit of light into the soul of anyone who have experienced bigotry and times of desperation. If anything, it is a good recount of a not-too-known episode of the Second World War and its aftermath.

--John Beam



### Maison Ikkoku: She's Leaving Home

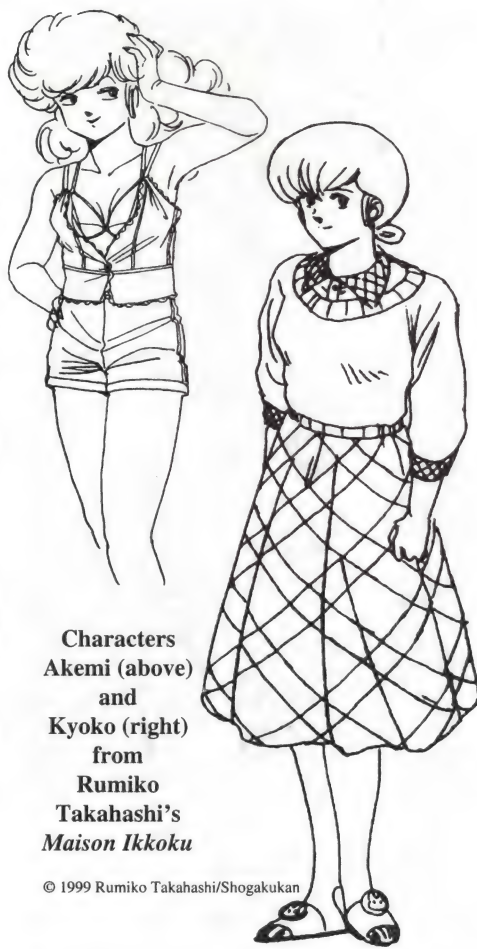
© 1998 Rumiko Takahashi/Shogakukan  
Viz Video Release  
52 minutes, VHS digital, hi-fi stereo  
Contains adult themes and situations

Yusaku Godai is a three-year college applicant (he eventually becomes a student) who is nearly at his wits' end when he decides that Maison Ikkoku (an old tenant house that rooms the most obnoxious individuals in all Japan) isn't a fit place for someone to study. On his way out the door, he comes face-to-face with the new manager, Kyoko Otonashi. The fact that the new manager is a SHE (and a rather good-looking she at that!) seems to have swayed Mr. Godai to stay, much to the other tenants' glee. But what Godai doesn't know (but will soon find out), is that Kyoko has been newly widowed, and she doesn't want to get over the love for her dearly-departed Soichiro.

Two years have past since these events, and now Kyoko's parents want her to get on with her life, drop the "Otonashi" name, and come back home. Their schemes to get her to leave Maison Ikkoku only (temporarily) leaves Godai in a state of panic, when they have her belongings removed, with a terse message that Kyoko was moving back home with them. However, nothing they can do will convince her that leaving the broken-down, old tenant building filled with binge-drinking tenants is the right thing to do (are you getting the idea that Kyoko is a very strong-willed individual?).

On the other side of town, Godai's old childhood friend Kozue Nanao is plotting to land Godai for her own. She sees herself as Godai's girlfriend, so she doesn't think there is anything odd about tricking him into meeting her parents for the first time (getting him to wear a tie and bearing a gift—bought by Kozue prior to the meeting). After a very odd dinner, Godai is lured into her bedroom, and is invited to kiss her for the first time. The temptation is strong, but then Godai suddenly sees in his mind what might happen: Kozue's father breaks in with a shotgun, and upon seeing his child being "defiled", demands that Godai marry her! Then, his is a double-wedding, with himself marrying Kozue, and his archrival Shun Mitaka marrying Kyoko! With these terrifying visions, do you think Godai will go through with it? But what can he do, because Kozue's lips are puckered, eyes closed, and she's waiting?

This title comes at a close second to Urusei Yatsura as my favorite Rumiko



Characters  
Akemi (above)  
and  
Kyoko (right)  
from  
Rumiko  
Takahashi's  
*Maison Ikkoku*

© 1999 Rumiko Takahashi/Shogakukan

Takahashi series. It is certainly the most balanced title, with a wonderful mix of hilarious comedy and deeply moving drama. It is also filled with multifaceted characters with dimension and personality. The characters drive *Maison Ikkoku* (there are quite a few of them), and I hope to introduce a few more of them to all of you in later editions of ANiMATO!. Stay tuned.

--John Beam

### Street Fighter 2 V

Volumes 9 & 10

© 1996 Capcom/Group TAC

Manga Video Release

Volume 9 runs 90 minutes,

Volume 10 runs 60 minutes

VHS, Color, Hi-Fi Stereo

Contains fighting sequences and other violence.

We've come to the end of this series. In this "Fight to the Finish," our friends Ken and Ryu must battle against the evil power of Vega (the main baddie's name in the Japanese version—his name is "Bison" in the English language version), the overseer of "Shadow Law," and the master of the "Psycho-power" fighting technique. However, first Ken must battle against his own friend Ryu, who is being controlled by

a "psycho-chip" implanted into his forehead. Vega/Bison wishes to see what a true friend will do if he is pushed too far by the other. Ken must either fight back with all his strength, or give up and be killed by his own best friend!

Meanwhile, in another part of the world, Cammy (who is being tricked into action by the Shadow Law agent Bison (or "Balrog" in the English version) is trying a second time to kill Chun-Li's father, a top officer in Interpol. First she must get by Fei Long, who is waiting for her this time. A pretty good battle ensues, which culminates with Cammy getting the best of her former partner in crime, Bison/Balrog—she figures out who the real bad guy is, and puts the moves on the big guy. However, back at Vega/Bison's fortress, Guile and Nash attempt to rescue Ken and Ryu. Guile gets by the big Russian Zangief, but Nash runs into Vega/Bison (unfortunately), and becomes burnt toast.

The battle between Ken and Ryu ends, when both of them use their "Hadou" technique at the same time, and the ensuing blast knocks the "psycho-chip" from Ryu's forehead. Now, the "Final Round" is Ken and Ryu versus Vega/Bison for the future of the world (as Guile has a "consolation match" with Chun-Li, who is being controlled by one of those nasty "psycho-chips"). Nobody seems to be able to stand two seconds against the Shadow Law boss with his psycho-power. So, have Ken and Ryu (both weakened their fight against each other) finally met their match? Or will they use the powers they've gained in their quest for the ultimate fighting skill—the Hadou—to defeat the ultimate in evil?

My final assessment of Street Fighter 2 V is that it's a pretty good series with some decent action. However, the first half of the series kept me wondering what the point of the story was. There seemed to be too much meandering around with Ryu and Ken, looking for fights and running into characters from the popular video game. Only when Vega/Bison comes on the scene do things finally get interesting, and we get to see who the real antagonist is. Also, we can see here that things can get very confusing with the names. They change to keep in line with how they go with the game in their respective regions (it is said that because the big boxer named "Bison" was too close to the name "Tyson", that the decision was made to switch them around, making Bison—"Balrog," Vega—"Bison," and Balrog—"Vega"). So, I would recommend that buyers stick to one language version. Mixing the two may cause much confusion.

--John Beam



## Giant Robo Volume One

© 1992/1995 Hikari Productions

Manga Video Release

90 minutes, VHS, color, Hi-fi, stereo

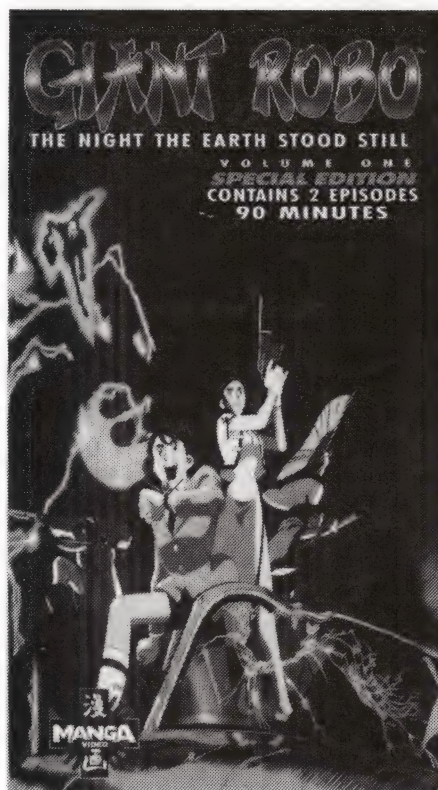
Contains violence and profanity

When I first heard about this title becoming an animated series, it immediately caused faded but fond memories of a cheesy, live-action series I used to see way back in the early seventies called *Johnny Soko and his Giant Robot*. This of course was the Americanized version of the original *Giant Robo*, but this time, the boy with the command wrist communicator doesn't strut about in a goofy outfit and helmet with antenna protruding from it. In fact, just about the only thing surviving from the original series is the fact that a young boy operates it, the robot retains its Egyptian sphinx-like countenance, and they both must battle against bad guys and *their* robots.

At the heart of this story is the creation of the so-called Shizuma Drive; a product which has replaced every form of power output device known at this time. Fossil fuels and nuclear power have all been replaced by this device, which is clean and recyclable. A new dawn of peace and prosperity has come because of the Shizuma Drive, but at what price? Enter an organization bent on world domination called "Big Fire." Apparently, there are serious flaws in the Shizuma Drive, and Big Fire knows exactly how to exploit these weaknesses. Big Fire's top agents, the Magnificent Ten, are on the verge of acquiring the first three Shizuma Drive prototypes, which caused "the Tragedy of Bashtarlle," a holocaust that caused the destruction of an entire nation. Upon their acquisition of these, they can revisit this destruction upon us once again.

However, "The Experts of Justice" are on the job, and they narrowly save Dr. Shizuma and the last precious prototype from being taken. Among them is young Daisaku Kusama, master of Giant Robo, the mightiest robot on Earth. But even with these forces, it seems as though Big Fire has the jump on our heroes. Dr. Shizuma's colleagues are murdered, and the one Shizuma Drive co-creator thought to be long-dead, Dr. Franken Von Folger, has been seen in and about Paris upon its untimely demise during an apparent earthquake (a sequence somewhat reminiscent of Paris' destruction in the film *Armageddon*).

Dr. Folger is thought to be the one responsible for the Bashtarlle catastrophe, and he might be on the verge of repeating



history once again. Can our heroes and Giant Robo stop and defeat the forces of Big Fire, or will the bizarre "Lord Alberto" and his fellow members of The Magnificent Ten crush justice under the enormous "Eye of Folger" (a device which renders all Shizuma Drives in its path inoperable, and hence stops all machinery dead in their tracks)? When Giant Robo is shown to be unaffected by this phenomenon, its true source of power is revealed! Stay tuned.

This is a neatly produced piece of animation, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. Apart from the somewhat goofy English dubbing (it also comes in a subtitled version), I felt this was one of the better anime titles of its type around. Beyond all the action and drama involved in the main story, there are also nifty subplots to keep things from becoming too redundant and predictable. It's just an all-around great program, and I look forward to continuing on with Volume two of *Giant Robo* in the next issue of ANiMATO!.

-John Beam

### Urusei Yatsura

TV Series Volumes 1-4

© 1981 Kitty Films AnimEigo Release

100 minutes each, VHS, mono

Contains brief nudity and adult situations

Yet another tremendously popular series by Rumiko Takahashi, *Urusei Yatsura* predates her other big-time winners, *Maison Ikkoku* and *Ranma*.

## Volume One:

Ataru Moroboshi, perhaps the most lecherous creature to ever breathe, is chosen to be Earth's champion against Mr. Invader's conquest of Earth (Mr. Invader is an "Oni", or the Japanese equivalent of a devil or demon). If Ataru can catch his daughter, Lum, by her horns in ten days, he'll save us all from certain destruction. Fortunately for us, he succeeds. Unfortunately for him, Lum misunderstands something Ataru says afterwards as being a marriage proposal, and for all intense and purposes considers herself as his wife!

In this volume, we are also introduced to Ataru's semi-girlfriend (and Lum's serious rival), Shinobu; Ataru's long-suffering, yet equally irresponsible parents, the bizarre Buddhist monk, "Cherry"; Lum's cute, yet deadly little cousin, Ten; Lum's incredibly handsome, yet crude and stupid former-fiancée, Rei (he also shape-changes into a hideous tiger-striped cow when upset), and "Lum's Stormtroopers" (essentially her fan club).

## Volume Two:

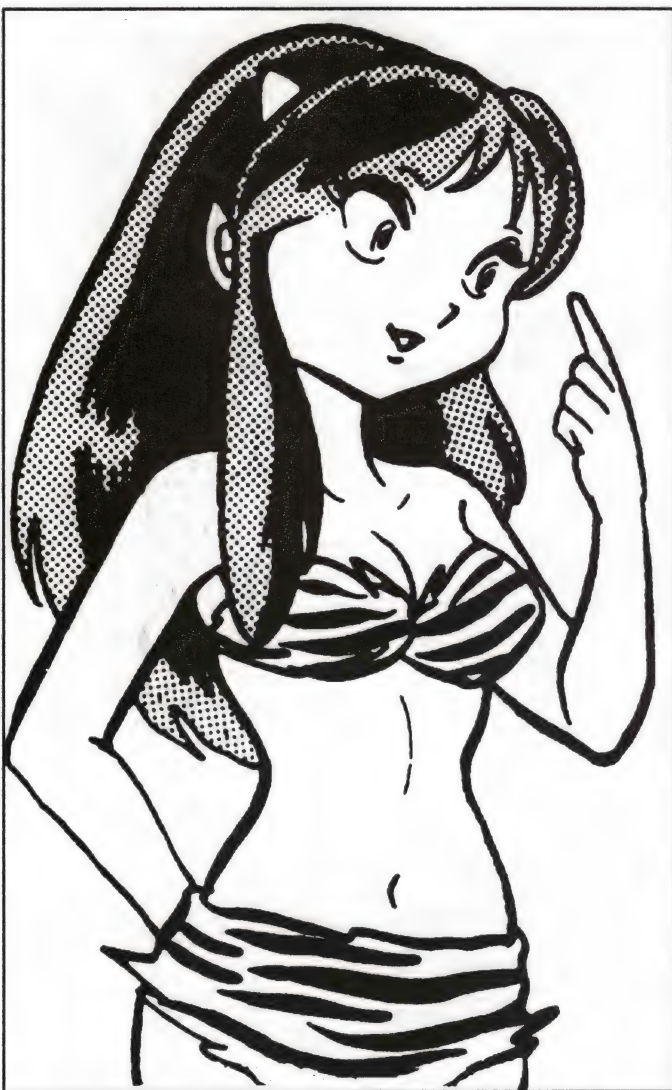
Here, we are introduced to Cherry's beautiful, but equally demented niece (and Shinto sorceress), Sakura (means "Cherry Blossoms"). She promises to perform an exorcism on Ataru, but instead dumps all the demons inflicting her on him! Later, Ataru asks Cherry to remove Lum's ability to inflict pain on him (not only can Lum fly, but she also punishes him with electric shocks whenever he's "unfaithful" to her). Cherry does so, but now Lum cannot go back to her spaceship, and he's stuck with her!

Lum introduces a "voodoo game" to Ataru, which gives him an idea for exacting revenge on all his past enemies. However, this also gives Lum the idea for doing the same thing against Shinobu! More strangeness occurs when Ataru and friends are transported to Neptune, where they meet Princess Oyuki (literally "head snowflake"). Of course Ataru attempts to "get acquainted" with her, but as things usually go for him, terrible circumstances result.

## Volume Three:

Yet another alien Princess, Kurama, becomes ensnared in Ataru's sticky web of lechery. Her "crow goblin" henchmen are on the lookout for "good-looking" humanoids to awaken her with a kiss from a cryogenic sleep, but one inebriated goof found Ataru instead. Since Ataru awakened her, she's sworn to mate with him, threatening her entire race with his corrupted genes! Can she reform him? Also, a parody of the first novel, *The Tale of Genji*; Sakura's fiancée, and aspiring black





**Urusei Yatsura:** Lum's tiger-stripe bikini is probably the most famous outfit in anime and manga. © 1999 Rumiko Takahashi/Shogakukan

magician, Tsubame; and Kurama's dad asks Ataru about how to pick up babes!

#### Volume Four:

Here, the gang goes to Hawaii, where we find out there are no limits to how much Sakura can eat (and keep her figure)! We are also introduced to another principle character, Shutaro Mendo, whose family conglomerate owns over 50% of the whole country! Ataru and Shutaro engage in the most serious class president election ever, one that nearly costs Ataru his head!

Not only do humans wage war, but also the gods! The Chinese Gods of Luck wage their annual End-of-Winter match against the Oni, and Lum decides to take Ataru along, where he meets yet another intergalactic babe, Benten.

Later, the mothers of the students at Tomobiki High School attend their PTA meeting, where Mrs. Invader (Lum's mom), and Mrs. Mendo (Shutaro's mom) nearly cause WWII

gives *Urusei Yatsura* his definite seal and identity.

#### Slayers The Motion Picture

© 1995 Kadokawa Shoten/Bandai Visual A.D. Vision Films Release  
Approximately 75 minutes  
VHS, hi-fi, stereo  
Contains violence and slight nudity

My first and only exposure to this series came from several episodes released as *The Slayers* by another company, so for as much as I know, here's what this is about. The main protagonist's name is Lina Inverse, and she is a sorceress-for-hire in a land where sword-play and sorcery are commonplace. She has a good head on her shoulders, and if she is needed to defeat an evil presence, she will save you if the price is right. If Lina has a problem, it is the fact that she is slight of build, and is often mistaken for a child (she has a HEAVY

This is my absolute favorite television program of all time (animated or not). However, the episodes for the first season are at times not very well animated, and occasionally the stories do not hit the mark with their humor. That said, I feel it is necessary (if you are to get a true feel about what is going on) to get at least the first volume of *Urusei Yatsura* in order to understand Lum's and Ataru's strange "relationship." In later seasons, I think both the stories and animation improve greatly.

Just one little aside regarding the series director. It is none other than Mamoru Oshii, who would go on to direct *Angel's Egg*, the *Patlabor* Series, and *Ghost in the Shell*. He fails to leave his mark on the first episodes of this series (which finally ended at 196!), but later he

chest-envy complex). Diminutive as she is, she is not to be trifled with under any circumstances. You could end up incinerated!

Having viewed this film, I have learned that Ms. Inverse has picked up a sidekick (who would rather be looked upon as a great wonder of nature in her own right) named Nahga the Serpent. Do not let the name fool you. She has the looks Lina no doubt envies (with secondary sexual characteristics to spare), even if her magic is not up to standards. Together, they meet every dangerous encounter with about as much concern as a timber wolf would show to an ant. Lina has a vast magical repertoire that includes the dreaded "Dragon Slave," a blast that rivals any thermonuclear explosion. Nahga is nearly as dangerous, and it seems they both often find the results of their magic a detriment to their aims.

Beyond all the minor encounters and excessive violence, the story is about an elderly dwarf named Rowdy and his desire to change the past. It seems that in his days of his youth, his village and ladylove were killed off by some particularly nasty demons, and the only way to save his land from further despair and destruction is to seek the aid of the aforementioned Ms. Inverse and her big-bosomed lackey. Encouraged by the promise of increased physical stature (if you catch my drift), Lina accepts Rowdy's offer to head off the evil that plagues his beloved island. However, the head demon apparently is not susceptible to Lina's blasts, and it seems as though all three of our heroes are in over their heads. Gee, will evil prevail, or will Rowdy's desire to save his love and Lina's desire for a body makeover triumph? You will have to see this to find out!

I had fun watching this, although I was bothered a little by the periods of minor confrontations Lina and Nahga face prior to the climatic battle. They are handled with good humor, but they do very little to advance the story. For the most part, the animation is standard limited fare, although when the action heats up the bar is raised considerably. I also enjoyed the Japanese voice cast, headed by the nearly ever-present and delightful Megumi Hayashibara (who plays Lina). *Slayers the Motion Picture* is certainly flawed, but there is enough to like for a recommendation.

-John Beam



Satoshi Kon's *Perfect Blue* is reviewed by Andrew Osmond on page 77



### DISNEY'S UNSEEN TREASURES

November 15th 1998 saw the first British presentation of Disney's Unseen Treasures, a 150-minute collection of (to quote the publicity) 'rare and unseen films, deleted sequences, pencil tests, works-in-progress, behind-the-scenes footage, trailers, newsreels, live-action shoots and forgotten cartoons.' Hosted by Disney archivist Scott MacQueen, the programme was previously shown at US venues including the Smithsonian Museum in Washington. The UK presentation was at London's National Film Theatre, screened as part of the capital's Film Festival. It was a sell-out: this writer only got in by queuing for standbys on the Sunday morning.

Most of the material was pre-1950, in MacQueen's words the period often seen as most interesting for the studio. The exceptions were live-action extracts from colour restorations of *In Beaver Valley*, *Pollyanna* and *The Story of Robin Hood*, along with the extended 'Portobello Road' dance-sequence reconstructed for the video *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*. In each case there were comparisons of footage before and after the restorations. The *Pollyanna* case was particularly amusing, with gaudy colour-schemes emerging in the trial-and-error process before something authentic was reached. (Watch those gift-boxes bought for Hayley Mills!)

The older live-action material was eclectic, including film of the Disney animators playing baseball on the studio's famed Hyperion Avenue lot (Walt and a reticent

Roy participate); a Pathe newsreel (and out-takes) of Walt signing distribution rights to RKO, flourishing figures of his toon creations; and a trade-film, *How Disney Films are Made*, released to complement Snow White and more informative than the sugared *Reluctant Dragon* version. There was also some remarkable footage of live actors mapping out the movement for classic Disney features. A Jiminy Cricket stand-in enthusiastically warms his rear ('Disney has a reputation for fanny jokes,' MacQueen remarked), a Mad Hat-

were a joy to watch) it became easier to identify the controversial man with his most famous creation. As MacQueen commented, it's tempting to parallel Mickey and Walt's careers, from adventurer through suburbanite to corporate symbol.

On the animated side, the big 'new find' was the rediscovered Laugh-O-Gram *Red Riding Hood*, one of Walt's first animations, discovered by a UK collector in a film library sale. The main fascination of this simply-drawn film is its predictions of animations to come. The 'wolf' in the

modernised version is a lecherous cad a la Tex Avery, while the hero saves the day in a plane years before Mickey's *Plane Crazy*. The girl travels in a cart pulled by her pet dog, who's enticed by a string of dangling sausages, a gag that should give déjà vu to anyone who's seen *Mulan*.

Also shown was the newly-restored *Clair de Lune*, a tranquil moonlit treatment of Claude Debussy's music, prepared for *Fantasia* (Leopold Stokowski conducts) but abridged in *Make Mine Music* under the name *Blue Bayou*. Three shorter snippets got an airing: a few seconds

of the aborted *Destino* short with Salvador Dali (two mask-like faces coming together, it looked more Svankmajer than Disney); a full-animation snippet of the Witch preparing the deadly apple in Snow White, trimmed from the release; and pencil-test extracts from an unmade Mickey/Pluto short in which the hound, exiled from home, strikes up with an exploitative ventriloquist.

Further pencil-test footage was shown



Katherine Beaumont and Jerry Colonna as Alice and the March Hare

ter expostulated for *Alice in Wonderland*, and dancers improvised moves for 'When I See an Elephant Fly' in *Dumbo*. As MacQueen commented, until recently viewers weren't meant to know all this happened.

The live-action highlight, though, was footage of Uncle Walt and Billy Bletcher, as Mickey and Pete respectively, voicing the 1940 short *Mr. Mouse Takes a Trip*. From Walt's face alone (his mannerisms





**Scott MacQueen**

Photo by Dan Dennehy for Walker Art Center

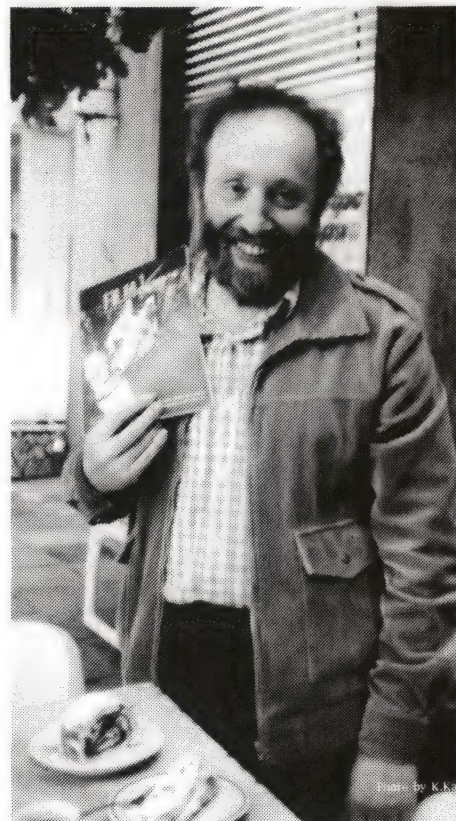
*Volunteer Worker* (1940) and the Dwarfs' war-bond efforts in *The Seven Wise Dwarfs* (1941) - or rather six, because Dopey foolishly puts his diamonds in a bank.

The Mouse had three very different airings. His first color appearance was shown, leading a parade of animated Oscar nominees in a brief film for the '32 awards, with gags such as Frederic March's Jekyll morphing into Hyde. (It foreshadowed Mickey's *Gala Premiere*, made the year after.) The pseudo-short *Mickey's Surprise Party* (1939) seemed a rather good picture with Mickey, Minnie and Pluto in fine chaotic mode but blew it all as Mickey

saved the day with 'Nabisco Cookies' - yes, an advert. (A version of *Surprise Party*, with suitable digital changes, is available on the recent *Spirit of Mickey* video.) It raised numerous groans from the audience, as did, a crude 1930 animation for the emergent Mickey Mouse clubs, featuring an unrecognisably-voiced Mickey (not Walt) exhorting the audience to sing an unsingable song. M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-E this wasn't, but as a piece of pop-culture history it held terrible fascination.

In all, a splendid afternoon for Disneyphiles. In a question-and-answer session afterward, MacQueen acknowledged he had more than enough material for a second presentation, so there may be more to come...

## NORSTEIN VISITS BRISTOL'S WATERSHED ART CENTRE TO SCREEN *OVERCOAT*



**Russian animator Yuri Norstein holding a copy of the excellent Japanese animation magazine 1/24, which depicts Norstein's *Tale of Tales* on the cover.**

Photo by K. Kawamoto



Graphic from Debussy's *Clair de Lune* © 1999 Disney Enterprises, Inc.

Last August saw a rare appearance by acclaimed Russian animator Yuri Norstein in Britain. Norstein, best known for his *Tale of Tales*, voted the Best Ever Animated Film by a panel of critics in 1984, visited Edinburgh's Film Festival before coming to Bristol to be interviewed by Aardman's Dave Sproston. The event was held at the Watershed Art Centre.

The focus of the Bristol event was a screening of the completed portions of Norstein's long-awaited *The Overcoat*, a projected feature film based on Nikolay Gogol's nineteenth-century story about a simple clerk who loses his most treasured possession. Speaking through an interpreter, the director explains how he intermittently filmed the story from 1981-86, but was halted by the social turbulence caused by Gorbachev's perestroika policy. 'During times of change, terrible things seem to happen', Norstein says ruefully.



*The Overcoat*, he says, was a bleak and shadowy counterpart to the light of *Tale of Tales*, both visually and thematically.

The longest complete sequence, a little over a quarter of an hour, was filmed at this time. The feature's opening, depicts Norstein's hapless clerk walking bustling snow-swept streets, filled with numerous characters, before reaching his isolated home to eat and work. His only companion is his fearsome-looking mother, who provides the film with some silent humour. Norstein then screened a more recent, two-minute scene where the clerk compulsively examines his beloved overcoat before bidding it farewell. The overall impression was closer to stop-motion (much of which come from Bristol) than to any drawn equivalent. However, *Overcoat*, which like Norstein's earlier works is inspired by everything from church icons to folk woodcuts, was distinctive in its own right.

As Norstein demonstrated, the figures were built from small pieces of celluloid intricately fitted together and inserted into backgrounds via a multiplane camera.

The most detailed elements were the faces: the wrinkled clerk himself (called Ikakyavich) had a child face and proboscis nose, and a petulant expression that, in Norstein's words, reflected 'the cosmic shock of a newborn baby.' In fact, it was based partly on photographs of the cameraman's dead father. Much of the 'action' concentrated on the subtle gestures and ripples of emotion which animate the character. "The whole of life is made of these tiny details," Norstein said, adding one purpose of the film was to ask, "How does the unobserved man behave?". He also confessed Ikakyavich had come to rule his life. "I want to get across the whole fate of the character - how he lives, suffers and dies."

Questioned afterward, Norstein explained that during the forced hiatus he always sketched his ideas. Today, he is shooting again, usually by night (on a good night he manages 4-5 seconds), with the invaluable help of an assistant artist who happens to be his wife. Although he storyboards, the animation takes its own momentum with the new elements and movements coming in (the quarter-hour opening was originally meant to be two minutes long). "Each animation frame is an interesting internal event", he explained, admitting he was unsure what his film was 'about', or what Ikakyavich's final fate would be. "The film is moving and I have to make it," he concluded. "Either I'll finish *Overcoat*, or it will finish me."

## VITAL FESTIVAL REPORT

Vital, the fourth international animation festival in Cardiff, was held from the 23rd to the 28th of June. The main base of operations was St. David's Hall in the centre of the capital, though the extensive 'Expo,' where numerous companies displayed their wares, was at the nearby International Arena. Yours truly was only able to go to a small selection of the items, but the range, as one would expect, was impressive.

mation (animated at Britain's Cosgrove Hall studio) which, the creator claimed, set new highs in the medium. Other companies represented were partners Nickelodeon and Klasky Cuspo, whose reps Albie Hecht and Terry Thoren presented a splendidly enjoyable showcase of past and current work, including sneak previews of *Wild Thornberrys* and the *Rugrats Movie*. Then there were 'Festival Salutes' to Joanna Quinn, creator of award-winning shorts *Girl's Night Out* and *Britannia*, and to Polish impressionist animator Jerzy Kucia.



Joanna Quinn's *Girls Night Out*

Many of the panels, of course, were devoted to up-and-coming commercial titles. These included *Bob and Margaret*, the Anglo-Canadian series produced by Nelvana/Channel 4 and based on the '95 Oscar-winning short (*Bob's Birthday*) by Alison Snowden and David Fine, who direct the series. The panel focused on how such an apparently 'British' concept had made its way to Comedy Central, and the process of expanding the film into a TV format. There was also an invitation to 'Meet the Gogs,' as well as their Cardiff-based creators Dieniol Morris and Michael Mort, taking time out from a big-budget special based on their prehistoric heroes.

Gerry *Thunderbirds* Anderson presented a panel on his past career and new project *Lavender Castle*, an ambitious space adventure with super-smooth model ani-

One particularly interesting panel, entitled 'You the Audience,' was hosted by the producer and director of *Dope Sheet*, a recent six-part Channel 4 series which tried to give a 'contemporary, accessible and exciting' introduction to animation - especially the short, independent films where Britain excels. The show's makers invited feedback on all areas, ranging from the viability of a 'virtual' host (which got a general thumbs-down) to the ideal selection of material to inform and entertain.

On the screenings side, the festival was opened by a preview of *The Magic Sword: Quest for Camelot* (the British title of the Warner Bros. film), while other features included Bill Plympton's *I Married a Strange Person* and Disney's reissued *Little Mermaid*. Anime was represented with two strong offerings, *Memo-*



ries (previously represented at the London Film Festival) and Satoshi Kon's surreal thriller *Perfect Blue*. And, of course, there were numerous collections of new shorts, some bizarre, some impenetrable, many excellent. Some have already won acclaim - Michael Salkeld's *Heavy Stock*, for example, a beautifully rendered series of ever-changing images of engineering and construction, or Ruth Lingford's haunting *Death and the Maiden*, from the Hans Christian Andersen story.

Others that impressed this writer included *Keep in a Dry Place away from Children*, the Bolex Brothers' latest effort (see issue 31), with a typically grotesque mutant baby; Daniel Saul's *Morris Jelly House of Fashion*, combining multiple film techniques to tell a tragic, ironic tale of everyday Calcutta; Paul Bush's *The Albartross*, a powerful retelling of the Ancient Mariner with 'scratched,' monochrome images based on 19th century engravings; Jonathon Hodgson's *Feeling My Way*, an attempt to portray inner dialogue; and Nick Donkin's *Doppelganger*, a hilarious stop-motion thriller starring national soccer hero Ryan Giggs. While all these used elaborate methods, one of the funniest offerings, Aardman's *Hum Drum* (Peter Paeake) used the simplest shapes and shadow puppets, combined with a witty script and voice-acting, to produce a sketch which had the audience roaring with laughter.

The festival had previously held a public website vote to nominate three 'family favourite' animations. The winners were Nick Park's *Close Shave*, which probably needs no introduction; *Famous Fred*, Joanna Quinn's Oscar-nominated entry about a pet cat who lives a secret life as a rock star; and Daniel Greaves' *Flatworld*, on a planet where everything is made of strips of cardboard and newspaper - until the hero is zapped into his TV.. Other anthologies ranged from the gross-out 'General Chaos: Uncensored Animation' through '30 Years of Swiss Animation' to 'Handbags and Hairdos - The Animator's Guide to Camp, Queer and Kitsch.' Add the presentations from George (*Insektors*) Lacroix and the Swede Magnus Carlsson, a *Desert Island Movies* presented by ultra-cult Canadian animator Marv Newland, retrospectives on Harry Smith and William Kentridge (the latter a South African whose charcoal-drawn 'Soho Eckstein' films won world acclaim), an exhibit of the work of legendary graphic artist Saul Bass, showcases by Cuppa Coffee, Imageworks and Industrial Light and Magic...truly, Vital was a rare justification of the cliché 'something for everyone.'

### Perfect Blue

Director: Satoshi Kon  
Japanese release 1997  
80 minutes

*Perfect Blue*, screened (subtitled) at the Cardiff Vital festival in June and scheduled for wider UK cinema release next year, is possibly too clever for its own good. It centres on a young female 'idol' singer, Mima, a colourful Japanese pop star of the kind immortalised in the *Macross* SF saga (better known to US viewers as the first segment of *Robotech*). Mima, however, is a down-to-earth, practical woman, striving to make her way in the modern city. Above all else, she dreams of leaving the pop industry behind and becoming a serious artist. But someone doesn't want her to go.

*Perfect Blue* is certainly stylish. The colourful, realistic look is well up to the standards we expect from new *animes* and the 'acting' from the characters is excellent, far removed from the limited movement which once hampered the medium. *Perfect Blue* also uses sophisticated narrative devices that would earn kudos in any live-action film. For example, the opening intercuts between Mima and her group performing to a rapturous crowd, and Mima hours later, going home alone, shopping in the supermarket, getting on with life. The contrast between 'public' and 'private' personas is neatly established, and proves to be the running theme in the film. This is an anime with brains.

Which is why it's slightly disappointing that the central device is so familiar. Basically, this is a 'what is reality?' thriller, of a kind familiar from *Nightmare on Elm Street* of any of the innumerable 'holodeck' episodes in the new *Star Treks*. As Mima starts acting in a *Silence of the Lambs*-type horror flick, the distinctions between reality, dreams and drama crumble. A killer stalks the film crew, murdering them in ways as gory as any splatter-flick. (Hints of *Scream*.) Mima has nightmares of a phantom singer with her face, taunting her that she is no longer 'real.' Meanwhile, the director plays deft tricks with the audience; for example, we appear to see Mima in everyday life, only for it to turn out to be a scene in the film she's making.

Later, things get even darker, particularly with a genuinely disturbing 'pseudo-rape' scene (part of the 'film-in-a-film' - the actors pause halfway through - but does that make a difference?). Such set-pieces intensify as Mima skips between alternate realities, timeloops, non sequiturs and general weirdness. Unfortunately, fun though

these are, they're accompanied by a breakdown in logic and construction as scenes meld together with gleeful disregard of coherence. By the climax it's hard not to take the violence and exploitation at face value, a pity given the earlier potent ideas.

*Perfect Blue*'s biggest asset is its novel treatment of personal identity - not exactly a common theme in popular films! - as poor Mima is threatened by her more popular idol singer persona. It's a dilemma Marilyn Monroe would have recognised. The film ties this 'loss of identity' to the real-life Japanese *Otaku* phenomenon - a subculture of data-obsessed fanboys. The *otaku* are represented by one particularly unwashed specimen who builds a website on which to rewrite Mima's life. Now that's scary...



### The Magic Sword: Quest For Camelot

Warner Bros.  
Directed by Frederik DuChau

Mediocre is the kindest word to describe Warner Bros. second animated feature of recent years, following the equally charmless *Space Jam*. *Quest for Camelot* is one of the 'new wave' of Disney-challengers launched in the wake of *The Lion King*, but in terms of quality it's down there with *Tom and Jerry: The Movie* or *The Pagemaster*. On paper, it looked so strong: an A-list voice-cast by any standards, a plot embedded in Arthurian mythology, a blind hero, a feisty '90s-style heroine—so where did it all go wrong?



Sadly, there's no shortage of answers. Technically, for all the flashy CGI (which sometimes works - as with Camelot's interior and Garrett's living forest - and sometimes doesn't - the painfully incongruous Ogre), it's an uninspiring film. The character movement is frequently off-key, even when you can't pick out what's wrong. A good example is the animation of the horses: their hooves visibly 'slide' along the ground as they run, a major problem in a medieval yarn. Again, the background work is patchy; some impressive detail, particularly in the forest, is offset by empty, postcard-bland landscapes. *Quest* is not unpleasant to look at, but it feels irredeemably sub-Disney, never making the grade on the big screen.

But this is only the start of *Quest*'s problems. The songs are pretty terrible (I could hear the audience groan as the next ballad started), only made worse by a horrid mismatch between Garrett's speaking and singing voice. One not-so-bad ditty, the two-headed dragon's 'If I Didn't Have You,' is ruined by a series of unfunny sight-gag anachronisms, only reminding you how much better *Aladdin* did this schtick. Though to be fair, at least Idle's and Rickles' double-act (voicing the two heads) made me smile. The other actors contend with terminally unmemorable characterisations, a pity given promising back-stories. (Both Kayley and Garrett have tragic pasts). The normally excellent Gary Oldman suffers particularly in his part as baddie Ruber, proving he can be at once hysterically over the top and desperately dull.

Add to this a meandering, unexciting story and one of the most annoying 'funny animals' I've ever suffered (a chicken who does Clint Eastwood impressions) and it's not surprising *Quest* doesn't gel. As a footnote, readers may like to know the film's very loosely adapted from Vera Chapman's novel *The King's Damosel*, which by all accounts deserves a closer, more respectful, rendering.

### Mulan

Walt Disney Pictures  
88 minutes

One of the advantages of being semi-employed is that I can see a movie twice on its first big-screen run. This has its downside (five hours of *Armageddon* can't be good for anyone), but it does mean one can reevaluate initial impressions. The first time I saw *Mulan* I emerged wondering what the critics were raving about. To me, it was the most disappointing film of the

year. The second time I could see..yeah, it was okay, light-years ahead of *Camelot*, superior overall to something like *Anastasia* (but not by much), but still..

Okay, it's my least favourite Disney feature toon of the post-Eisner era, excluding vids and TV spinoffs. To get them off my chest, here are my four main reasons: lots of tiresome slapstick; the grotesquely designed and buffoonish support cast (why didn't they all ride off and get massacred); and grating, really terrible songs one would expect in a straight-to-vid but not a film like this. OK, each new Disney toon has at least one ghastly song, but there's usually a slightly higher hit rate. Though I blush to say I found *I'll Make a Man Out of You*, catchy - and I'm not well inclined toward



Mini-dragon Mushu

my Donny namesake. And then there was the dog. Don't get me started about *Mulan*'s dog. For a ghastly moment I thought a chicken would turn up with an axe for a beak and start mumbling, 'Do you feel clucky?,' and then, dear reader, I would have to have joined the Concerned Women for America. Moreover, for me this was the first 'new Disney' where the stock elements were impossible to forgive. Check the list; yes, another 'I want' song; another 'name' comedian (Murphy is fun, but he's no Williams or Woods); more CG effects that don't quite fit (tell me if you think those palace crowds are convincing); another fight in the architecture (culminating in an explosion rather than a fall, oh novelty); and oodles of American anachronisms summed up in that age-old cry, 'No father, the legacy of the women's movement compels me to insist on the freedoms

enjoyed by all US teenagers.' OK, I nicked the phrase from a British reviewer but you won't read him, heh. Or, as another writer better than me pointed out, if Disney's new heroines are really freethinkers, why do they all act identically? (On the other hand, as a Miyazaki fan I can't push this too far...) The odd thing is that 'new Disney' has bifurcated into two strands. There are the (would-be) epic, serious, productions like B&TB, *Lion King*, *Pocahontas* and *Hunchback*, and then there are fun, funny films like *Aladdin* and *Hercules*. Now, *Mulan* was under false colours from the start. One of the most prominent trailers - you know, the one with the Emperor's voice-over intoning, 'And soon the world shall know...' and the haircut bit - insisted it was squarely List A, but it's turned out watered-down List B, sidestepping the genuine sophistication of *Hercules* - Meg was far more innovative than *Mulan* - and going for *Aladdin*'s lame bits. At least *One Jump Ahead* was only a few minutes. And *Mulan*'s attempts at cover-up are make-shift: one minute we're strolling through snow-capped mountains singing jolly songs about *The Girl I'm Looking For...*, then we're in a burned village and it's all *Saving Private Ryan*. Granted, *Hunchback* had these switches but for all my railings against Quasi, I couldn't deny that Disney was trying something new and exciting, a defence I'd make of all the other unpopular '90s films. *Mulan*...well, I couldn't see it.

Right, enough Disney baiting. The gender-switch sequence is terrific; the avalanche sequence likewise; *Mulan*'s shrine reflection is a superb image; the Chinese-letter writing was a hoot; and I think it's the first time we've really seen a Disney family together (well, at the beginning and end). The much-vaunted, 'simplified' backdrops were very pleasant once I got used to them, a huge improvement over the murk of *Pocahontas*, and almost made up for the grotesques parading in front of them. And yes, the palace battle was good, despite the *deja vu*, and I even laughed at Murphy's Batman impression. (Though 'Does this dress make me look fat?' was trying too hard.) As for the baddie, I'm still wavering; I think he was either over or underused but can't decide which.

OK, I like *Mulan*. Rats. Not a lot, and it represents some steps back for the studio, but I like it. But if it paves the way for Superman gags in *Tarzan*, expect me in denial.

--Andrew Osmond





# Play it Again, Sam-I-Am

©1996  
ROBERTS  
& SIERBEY

**PLAY IT, SAM.  
PLAY IT, SAM-I-AM.**



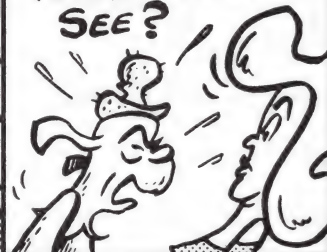
**I WILL NOT PLAY IT.  
RICK DOES NOT LIKE  
FOR ME TO PLAY IT.**



**FOR ME, SAM?  
PLAY IT FOR ME,  
SAM-I-AM?**



**I WILL NOT PLAY IT  
FOR YOU!  
I WILL NOT PLAY IT  
FOR ME!  
RICK DOES NOT LIKE  
FOR ME TO PLAY IT,  
SEE?**



**COULD YOU PLAY IT  
IN A TERRORIST STANCE?  
WOULD YOU PLAY IT  
IN PARIS, FRANCE?**



**WE'LL ALWAYS HAVE  
PARIS, WON'T WE, SAM?  
WE'LL HAVE PARIS,  
SAM-I-AM.**



**WE NEVER HAD PARIS,  
YOU CONFUSED MAM'SELLE.  
AND I WON'T PLAY IT  
TILL IT FREEZES  
IN HELL!**



**WOULD YOU PLAY IT  
WHILE I ENJOY SOME  
YAHTZEE?  
COULD YOU PLAY IT  
WHILE I INJURE A  
NAZI?**



**PLAY IT, SAM.  
PLAY IT, SAM-I-AM.**



**I SHOULD GET RICK  
TO OKAY IT,  
BUT THERE'S SOMETHING  
IN THE WAY YOU SAY IT.  
I WILL!  
I WILL PLAY IT!**



**I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU  
NOT TO PLAY THAT, SAM.  
I THOUGHT YOU WOULD  
OBEY THAT, SAM-I-AM.**



**OF ALL THE RHYMES  
THRU ALL THE TIMES  
SHE HAS TO CLIMB  
INTO MINE ...**



**MY HEART BY THIS DAME  
WAS BUSTED, SAM.  
FOR MY PART, THIS DAME  
CAN'T BE TRUSTED, SAM-  
SAM... WHERE YOU AM,  
SAM-I-AM?**



**THIS SHOULD BE,  
THIS COULD BE  
THE BEGINNING OF A  
BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP,  
OR I AM NOT SAM-I-AM!**



**BY THE WAY,  
DO YOU LIKE  
GREEN EGGS AND HAM?**





# BOOKWORMS

## The Rocky and Bullwinkle Book

By Louis Chunovic

Bantam Books, November, 1996.

224 p.: four-color artwork throughout;

11" x 11"; 86 lb. glossy paper.

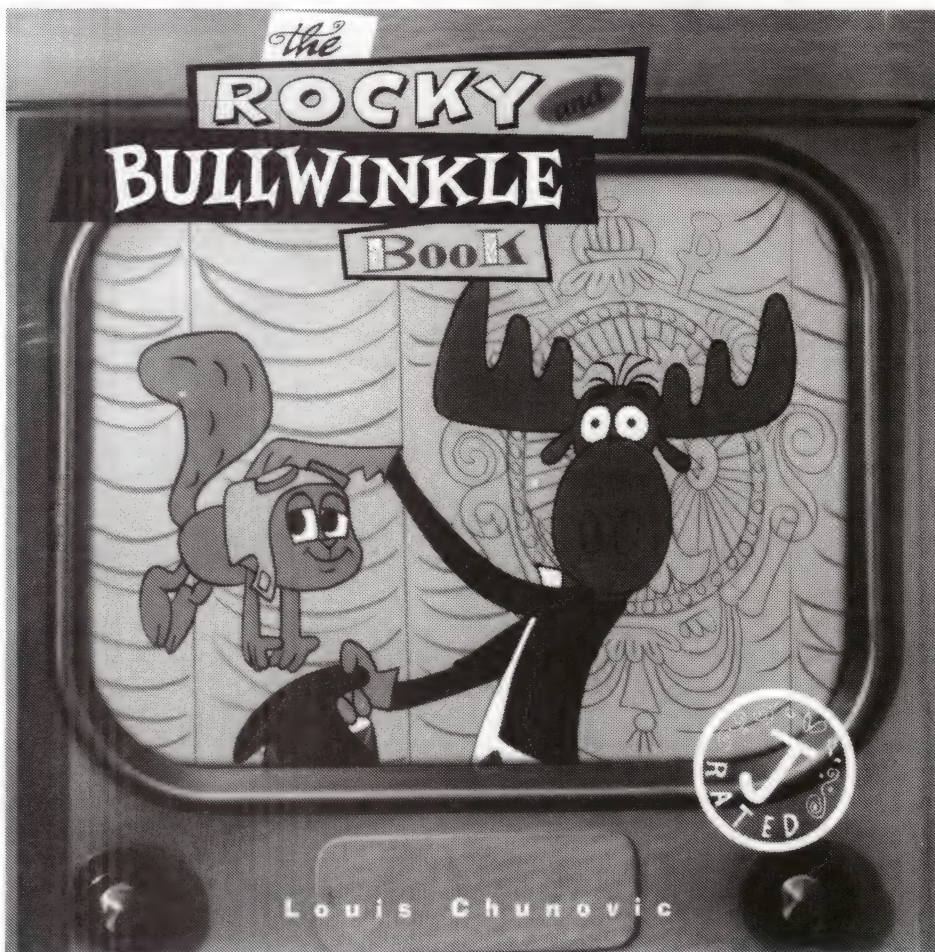
ISBN:0553105035: \$50.00

(\$70.00 Canada)

When they titled this book *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Book*, they weren't kidding. This is *not* a history of Jay Ward Productions. Only a few pages are devoted to Peabody's Improbable History, *Dudley Do-Right*, *Fractured Fairy Tales*, and *Æsop and Son*, though Chunovic's afterword hints at a future volume dealing with these segments. Even Bullwinkle's Corner/Mr. Know-It-All is dealt with only sporadically, without a complete listing, nor any mention of Bullwinkle and Rocky Fan Club (cf. *FFFFF* 7.3, page 12). And although Rocky, Bullwinkle, Boris, Natasha, Mr. Peabody, Sherman, *Æsop* and Son, Dudley, and Horseall appeared in commercials for Big G cereals (cf. *FFFFF* 7.4/8.1, pages 45), all Chunovic says about General Mills is that *Box Top Robbery*, the second Rocky and Bullwinkle adventure, didn't exactly endear Ward Productions to the sponsor a cereal company (page 122).

Other Jay Ward cartoon shows (*Cruader Rabbit*, *Hoppity Hooper*, and *George of the Jungle*) are not even mentioned, though *Fractured Flickers* comes up in the context of the promotional stunt celebrating its debut. *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening, interviewed in the introduction, says that Jay Ward reminded him of Captain [sic] Crunch, but there is no indication in the book that Jay Ward produced commercials for Cap'n Crunch (for twenty-one years!) and other Quaker cereals (cf. *FFFFF* 7.4/8.1).

The book is artistically laid out by a professional design firm. This means that there's a lot of blank space. The text portions are in a fairly large font, with very wide linespacing. The episode guide is punctuated by facing pages with a short quote in the middle of the left-hand page and a small drawing in the middle of the



right-hand page. While this may make the book more attractive aesthetically, it means that less information can be conveyed. The problem is exacerbated by Chunovic's repetition of material. Pages 214 and 215 present some catch-phrases and other quotations from the show virtually all of which have been quoted earlier in the book. Couldn't Chunovic find any more good ones?

The section I found the most informative was the one on promotional stunts (pages 53-96), which provides details of the Moosylvania statehood campaign, the picnic in the Plaza Hotel, and the *Fractured Flickers* send-off for which Jay Ward rented Coney Island and two subway trains. Over a dozen of the studios promotional

fliers, most created by Allan Burns, are reproduced in their entirety in this chapter.

Almost half of the book consists of summaries of the 326 episodes of *The Adventures of Bullwinkle and Rocky*. Chunovic has renumbered episodes 301-366 as 261-326 in order to fill in the gap in the original numbering system. (There were no episodes 261-300.) This section of the book is illustrated with panels from the storyboards for the cartoons, which were drawn primarily by Roy Morita and Shirley Silvey (cf. *FFFFF* 9.3, pages 13).

Although profusely illustrated, the book contains very few images from the actual cartoons. In addition to the storyboards and promotional fliers mentioned above, there are also some vintage crayon draw-



ings. Many of these seem to depict merchandising ideas, such as a Bullwinkle coat hanger, Rockys mixed nuts, or a Mr. Peabody slide-whistle. The model sheet for Bullwinkle (page 102) is copyright 1983 and shows Bullwinkle in that stupid sweater that I used to complain about all the time. Other illustrations are taken from calendars produced in the 1990's and from limited edition cels drawn by Alex Anderson.

The book contains three photographs of Jay Ward, all uncaptioned. On page 59, he is pictured with Rod Serling and with Fabian, both of whom were guests on *Fractured Flickers*. The photo on page 75 shows Bill Scott, actress Jayne Mansfield, L.A. county sheriff Peter J. Pitchess, and Jay Ward. No other studio personnel are depicted in photographs. On the other hand, there are twenty-one photographs of the Rocky and Bullwinkle statue. (Some of these also show the statue formerly located across the street, of which the Bullwinkle statue was a parody.)

A few caricatures drawn by Bill Scott also go uncaptioned. Writer Lloyd Turner tells Bill Scott, "You've given me the confidence to go forward!" on page 46, and appears with Scott again on page 49. The upper drawing on page 50 depicts Turner, Jimmy MacGeorge, and Scott. Scott's caricatures of Jay Ward appear on pages 48, 49, and 50.

The book gives voice credits only for the starring characters, and not for such major supporting players as Fearless Leader (Bill Scott), Captain Peachfuzz (Bill Scott in Jet Fuel Formula, Paul Frees thereafter), and the moonmen Gidney (Bill Scott) and Cloyd (Paul Frees). Mr. Big, who appeared in two adventures, *Upsidaisium* and *Metal-Munching Mice*, is not pictured, even in shadow.

The book does contain a few tidbits of information that were new to me. For example, an animated Bullwinkle did a song-and-dance number with a live-action Vic Damone on *The Lively Ones* (NBC, 1962) (page 108). Bullwinkle's fan mail was answered by Linda Simmons, who later married writer Chris Hayward (page 45).

This book was clearly intended as a coffee table book, not a reference book. It emphasizes pictures rather than text. On these terms, it can be considered a success, though one wishes they had included more images from the cartoons themselves. Its fifty-dollar price tag is sure to put off many potential buyers, but perhaps a paperback edition will follow. -Charles Ulrich

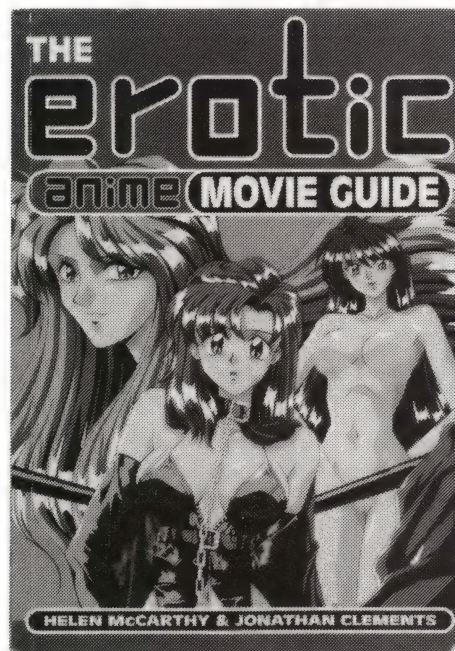
(See page 42 for corrections to *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Book* --Editor.)

## The Erotic Anime Movie Guide

By Helen McCarthy and Jonathan Clements  
Titan Books 192 pp.

I was slightly hesitant suggesting this title to review (in mid-September), but the editor had no qualms. After all, he pointed out, it would hardly be the most explicit piece of literature in the public eye...

The timing of this sequel to the more general *Anime Movie Guide* (reviewed in Issue #36) is ironic in other ways, appearing in Britain just as Disney's version of *Kiki's Delivery Service* hits the shelves



across the Atlantic. The book touches on the Disney-Tokuma deal, quoting a *New York Times* article which claims that *Kiki* isn't anime because, in America at least, anime refers strictly to adult Japanese animation (or 'pornimation'). While that comment may be grossly misleading, it underlines how prominent anime erotica has become in the west. At least the *Times* was better-informed that Britain's top-selling film 'zine which, on hearing of the Disney deal, reported that the Mouse had turned to sex and violence.

*The Erotic Anime Movie Guide* is no prurient cash-in, nor is it a simple filmography like its predecessor. Only the last third of its 200 pages is given over to a select 'A-Z,' and many of those titles aren't overtly erotic; the titles range from the gender-confused *Here is Greenwood*, through cheesecake space-operas like *Dirty Pair* and *Gunbuster* and the refined passions of *The Sensualist*, to the cheerful

lechery of *Lupin III*. Authors Helen McCarthy and Jonathan Clements, the two best-known commentators on the British anime scene, have aimed to provide a critical overview in the mould of Frederik L. Schodt, whose two books on manga remain indispensable to serious fans. The book is dedicated to Schodt, and I think he would applaud their efforts. The writing throughout is excellent: lucid, intelligent and thought-provokingly analytical. And like Schodt's books, context is all-important, as the animes being discussed are set against Japanese pop-culture and, more provocatively, that of the west.

The book's chapters each cover a different aspect of the medium. The first takes anime before the birth of the straight-to-video market in '83, with fascinating details of anime's early years combined with discussions of Tezuka's ventures into eroticism with *1001 Nights* and *Cleopatra* (the latter released in America as *Cleopatra, Queen of Sex*, pre-dating *Fritz the Cat* as the first 'X'-rated toon). Chapter Two discusses the historic and practical circumstances which shape anime erotica; be warned, this goes into 'frank' detail. Later sections cover *shonen ai* anime, 'pretty boy' gay erotica aimed at female viewers; the (in) famous *Cream Lemon* series; the work of Go Nagai (*Devil Man*, *Cutey Honey* and the 'completely depraved' *Kekko Kamen*); the market in sexy anime-style computer adventures; and other areas.

Given the wide range of material, why do I have qualms about this book? I suppose because for every question it answers, another seems to be begged. The material is so diverse one searches in vain for a 'big picture.' Even within the text, there are some odd asymmetries. For example, McCarthy allows that male and female viewers will have different perceptions of male stereotypes, but in a later chapter (see below) Clements claims 'all female archetypes are keyed towards male wish-fulfillment.' Does this reflect a fundamental difference between anime males and females, or simply that the authors have different views?

It's also unclear if certain animes are discussed because they're representative of the medium, because the authors deem them interesting, or because they're just popular. That last point is itself ambiguous, because McCarthy and Clements talk about anime's impact in the west as much as Japan. That seems to be the rationale for including a twenty-page section on Toshio Maeda, the manga artist behind such extreme titles as the *Overfiend* saga, the Brit-banned *La Blue Girl* and the self-explana-



tory *Demon Beast Invasion*. It's a sad fact that *Overfiend* is the best-selling anime in Britain beside *Akira*, and Clements' analysis of Maeda's nihilistic, utterly misanthropic ethos is fascinating and instructive. But I'm not convinced this justifies a detailed trawl through each of his works, after which the reader will want to wash his head out with soap.

Other qualms are more personal. Rather disconcertingly for a book on erotica, McCarthy spends much time discussing girls' anime, partly to draw out its reactionary themes but also to draw thematic analogies between 'magic girl' series (where the young heroines morph into mature, supernatural, guises - *Sailor Moon* is a prime example) and the seedier, *Lolita*-themed adult animes where innocent little girls conceal sexpot personalities. The argument is interesting but, as presented, too general to be clear or conclusive. For example, does it suggest a casual link? Or that both categories have the same appeal to western—largely male—fans? Several of my acquaintances, holding no particular candle for magic girls or their impure counterparts, saw it as a link too far. The fact so much space is devoted to the magic girl format makes the problem stand out.

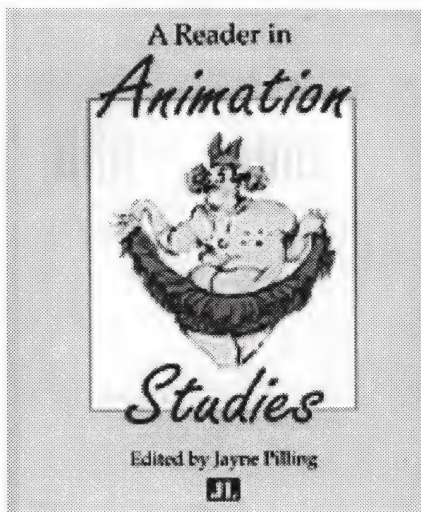
In a later section, Jonathan Clements picks out what he claims are the 'six basic types of female anime character,' exposing the medium's sexism. There's the klutzy-but-otherwise bland girl next door (most desirable to the male viewer); the butch tomboy; the frills-and-flounces maiden; the older woman; the seductive but perilous alien/robot/foreigner; and the (often obnoxious) child. All these types are backed up with examples, but as counter-case after counter-case came to mind, I couldn't help wonder if Clements was selling anime short. (It should be said the discussion is expressly generalised and qualified.) Again, McCarthy's account of *shojo* (girls') anime as deeply reactionary is open to counter-example; a *shojo* buff I know strongly thinks the contrary. Apologies for mentioning other peoples' views, but the thing about the *Erotic Anime Movie Guide* is that it makes you want second opinions. And third, and fourth.....

Readers take note: like the earlier Titan books, this is primarily written for a British market, although it mentions many titles available 'unrated' in America which wouldn't pass Britain's censors. However, the chapter on anime's reception in Britain (titled 'Snuff out these Sick Cartoons,' after a headline in the *Daily Star*) is worth reading by anyone. Fascinating in its facts and figures, it also demonstrates how a

commercial medium can be hyped, distorted and bastardised into a complete new form. As Clements says, 'Writing off anime, as many critics have done, on the basis of the headline grabbing minority of erotica, is as insane as decrying all cinema as a variation on *Debbie Does Dallas*....' Sales figures for certain pornographic anime abroad are greatly in excess of their sales back in Japan. This might imply that occidentals are far more perverted than their oriental cousins, but is rarely mentioned by journalists.'

The implication is clear; erotic anime is as much a western phenomenon, founded on schlock journalism and canny hype, as it is anything to do with Japan's pop-culture. Maybe that's why it's so confusing. A disorienting, often disturbing, but always rewarding read.

-Andrew Osmond



### A Reader in Animation Studies

Edited by Jayne Pilling

Published by John Libbey & Company Pty Ltd.,

Sydney, Australia. ISBN 1-86462-000-5

Like any good compendium of essays, *A Reader in Animation Studies* ranges widely in subject and approach. Although only a handful of these essays are my cup of tea, many of them offer solid writing and valuable insights. With a few exceptions, even those that are less engaging still provide the necessary underpinnings on which to build the structure of a viable animation theory. The contributors to this volume have done much of the heavy lifting required to define and validate such a structure.

Although existing film theory already addresses the basic concerns regarding the nature of animation, many of these papers

help bring specific issues into focus.

One of the virtues of a book like this is the credibility it brings to a marginalized field of study like animation by raising its respectability level in the Scented Groves of Academe. Unfortunately, with this territory comes the occasional posturing of a breed of academics who tend substitute untidy scholarship for real research and obfuscatory posturing for clarity. There are examples of that here, although they are blessedly small minority.

The book groups its collection of essays, all originally presented at the Society of Animation Studies' annual conferences between 1989 and 1993, into five sections entitled "New Technologies," "Text and Context: Analyses of Individual Films," "Contemporary Cartoons and Cultural Studies," "Theoretical Approaches" and "(Rewriting) History."

The first section is probably the most formidable in terms of reader-friendliness. Starting out with a paper that struggles to achieve a comprehensive, working definition of "animation," the reader might hope for some notion of why this is a problem worth considering and a breakthrough solution. Instead, the article offers only fretful hand-wringing over a helium-inflated concern. A second essay, which tries to square digitally-created virtual reality with our notions of natural reality as captured on film, speaks directly to film scholarship, but only obliquely to the concerns of the branches of the art that are less concerned with replicating reality. The remaining essay in this set helps bring the two together in its study of "second order realism" in Pixar's *Red's Dream*, although it constructs a labyrinthine system of thought that will require a trail of bread crumbs to find your way out, with a disappointingly obvious conclusion at its center.

The second section, eight articles analyzing specific films, is much more readable. Each author grounds his or her ideas in the films themselves, resulting in seven very good papers and a not so good one. The good ones deal with: the influences on the Brothers Quay; a history of Iron Curtain era cartoons from Eastern Europe; gender representation in films by Joanna Quinn, Cathy Guard and Alison DeVere; an almost psychoanalytic essay on *Asparagus* and *All My Relations*; the dialectic between cel space and clay animation found in Fleischer's early *Koko* film *Modelling*; a terrific exploration of the career of Bohemian animator Berthold Bartosch, whose forward-looking works were destroyed by the Nazis; and a defense of Norman McLaren (whom the author feels is an



overlooked artist-?!) as a post-modernist.

The remaining piece in this chapter is a rather disconnected essay called "Disney, Warner Brothers and Japanese Animation." The longest piece in the book, it begins by mixing a number of familiar observations about Disney with some rather odd mis-statements ("Disney favored Mickey for he was the only character born in short films"), followed by a few meager pages that seriously mis-quote WB cartoons, generally concluding through comparison that while Disney avoided making cartoons about characters in broad conflict, all other American cartoon studios could produce nothing OTHER than conflict. Hoping I have fairly characterized this portion of the writer's thesis, I would have to assert that one would have to view an extremely unrepresentative selection of films to propose this sentiment. Next comes a long discussion of anime, dropping the comparative context established in the previous parts of the article, dwelling on defending anime on the basis of the unimportance of polished animation when making a statement on rugged individualism. So I guess that the author's theme can be summed up as follows: "Warner animation is different from Disney animation. Anime is different yet."

The next section of the book, "Contemporary Cartoons and Cultural Studies," contains two essays. The first examines Disney's Aladdin against a backdrop contrasting Western culture's romantic view of the perfumed Arabesqueries of Aladdin's Middle East with contemporary political realities. It's a well-written consideration, but a thin theme. Next comes a reasoned account of the Ren and Stimpy/Nickelodeon story, remarkably free of axe-grinding. The author describes a climate in which the corporate world and culture are pushing and pulling at one another. Inject into this a new cultural capital, that of the hip animatophile. According to this account, when programming caters more to the animatophile than to either the broader culture or to commerce, something will have to give.

The four papers filed under "Theoretical Approaches" take us back to academic ground, which, as we found earlier, can be a minefield. While unquestionably scholarly, these papers reach far to make comparisons between animation and other art forms. When handled deftly, this kind of discussion can be enlightening, but too often, these fragile linkages stretch to the breaking point. Such is the trouble with "Francis Bacon and Walt Disney," which tries hard to break down the wall between

painting and animation. Next comes a descriptive, exhaustive treatise cataloging the various representations of body awareness in the films of Jan Svankmajer. Such symbolic, metaphysical meanings elude me, but the author has certainly covered this topic with admirable thoroughness. "Eisenstein and Stokes on Disney" gathers Russian director and theoretician Sergei Eisenstein's thoughts on early Disney animation and compares them to British aesthete Adrian Stokes' notes on ballet and Mickey Mouse. In unpacking these two trunks side-by-side, some thoughts on virtuosity and control emerge, but ultimately collapse under their own weight. A better essay rounds out the set, examining self-reflexive cartoons like *Duck Amuck* as a

Nazi dogma. The remaining pieces on European influences on Disney and Disney's Latin American films (way too much Disney, as opposed to other American studios; the editor professes a degree of indifference to Hollywood animation, a serious flaw with this collection) bring little new material to the table.

So can I recommend that you seek out a copy of *A Reader in Animation Studies*? If you have an interest in examining animation scholarship and some little-known history, yes. The best of these papers are very good indeed. They offer a number fresh and challenging insights. Apart from the occasionally frustrating essay, it's enough of a rewarding and valuable book to merit attention. --Dewey McGuire

### **Word of Mouth: A Guide to Commercial Voice-Over Excellence**

By Susan Blu and Molly Ann Mullin

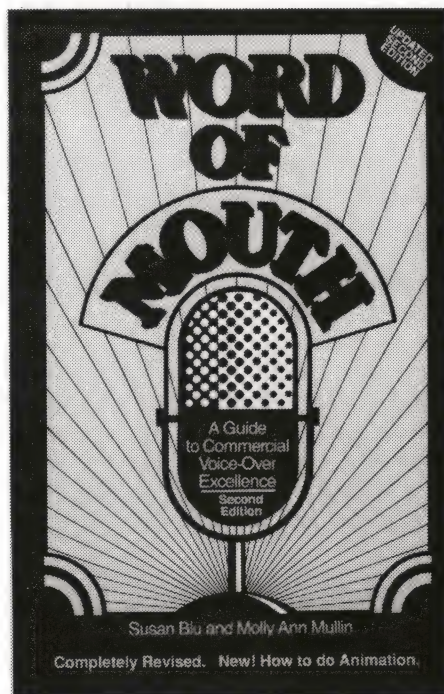
Second Edition, 182 pages

Pomegranate Press

We've all thought about it at one time or another while watching our favorite cartoons. Do I have what it takes to be a voice actor? How does the average Joe Lunchbox go about getting into this business, anyway?

*Word of Mouth: A Guide to Commercial Voice-Over Excellence*, can get you started on your way to see if you're the next Mel Blanc. Veteran voice actor Susan Blu (remember the Pillsbury Dough Girl?) and Molly Ann Mullin, an award winning writer who also has voice-over experience, have pooled their talents and teamed up to write this comprehensive guide to voice acting.

All the bases are covered in *Word of Mouth*, guiding readers through the process of moving from voice actor wannabe to getting that first voice-over job. Along the way, Blu and Mullin employ a combination of interviews with voice-over personalities, step-by-step instructions, voice exercises and sample copy to show readers how this highly specialized industry works. Blu and Mullin build their techniques on what they call "The Basic Process." Through exercises and refinements, readers are instructed in what skills and talents they will need in order to enjoy success in commercials or cartoons. Those without any acting experience will be able to appreciate the book's straightforward instruction in the more technical aspects of using one's voice, while even the most seasoned stage actor may find sections discussing production of demo tapes, finding representation, and promoting oneself quite informative.



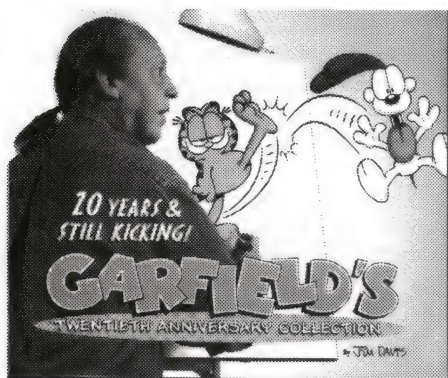
pure form of post-modernism.

The final section offers four writings on animation history, again with mixed results. William Moritz contributes two excellent essays (he also wrote three equally fine pieces found elsewhere in this book). The first, on the restoration of silent films, describes the fragmentary silent abstract footage of European animators and the process of piecing it together. The personalities of the abstractionists of this period fascinate me: vehement in their renunciations, absolute in their assertions, and completely focused on their aesthetics. In his next article, Moritz has written a compact and intriguing account of film-making under the thumb of the Nazi regime, and a heroic animator (Hans Fischerkoosen) whose daring and witty films challenged



*Word of Mouth* won't get you a gig on *The Simpsons* by itself, however. Blu and Mullin make it clear that breaking into the industry isn't easy. Readers are encouraged to participate in workshops or seek private instruction in voice-acting, which can be found in the book's appendices. Workshops, instructors, demo tape producers, and agencies are listed by city, but sadly the entries feature only names and telephone numbers, no addresses or descriptions of services. Just remember to bring *Word of Mouth* along with you on your first gig, as the glossary will come in handy if a director tells you to "billboard it," or to "romance the 'phone."

-Brett Rogers



**Garfield's 20th Anniversary Collection: Twenty Years and Still Kicking!**  
Ballantine Books

(Kicking Odie, that is). Fans of the famous fat cat will not want to miss this two decade reprise of the tenacious tabby's feline frolics. This is also the book for those mildly interested souls who only want one Garfield collection. Too much Garfield is never enough, as a certain orange cat might say, and Jim Davis, never slow to merchandise, offers a treasure trove of things Garfield, including a Garfield fan club at \$30 bucks a shot and the inimitable Garfield catalog. This full-color collection is rife with revelations, and following Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes Tenth Anniversary Book*, includes a light-hearted history by Jim Davis, as well as favorite strips from each year illustrating Garfield's evolution through the decades. At fifteen bucks, this may be the gift book of the season (although I had to buy it for myself). You can also get the catalog by accessing Garfield's official web site at:

<http://www.garfield.com> or calling PAWS @ 1-888-274-PAWS (7297).

-Gord Wilson

## Disney-The Mouse Betrayed

*Greed, Corruption and Children at Risk*  
by Peter Schweizer and Rochelle Schweizer

Regnery Publishing 374 pgs.

\$24.95 (\$34.95 Canada)

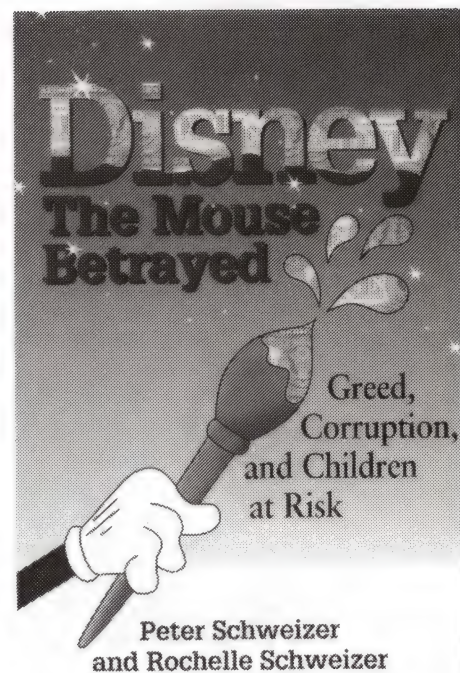
ISBN 0-89526-387-4

*Disney - The Mouse Betrayed* is a mess of a book about a mess of a company, startling and boring by turns. In the last few years, Disney observers have been offered *Hollywood's Dark Prince*, Marc Eliot's hatchet-job biography, followed by *From Mouse to Mermaid*, a would-be academic critique. Now it's the turn of the journalistic expose.

When Don Bluth's *Anastasia* was released earlier this year, a number of critics joked that its fairy-tale treatment of the Russian revolution could be traced to Fox's ownership by the right-wing magnate Rupert Murdoch. The Murdoch-figure for the Schweizers is Michael Eisner, the book starting with his ascent to Disney Chairman and CEO in 1984. (Minor figures like, er, Jeffery Katzenberg are only mentioned in passing.) The problem with this approach is the same one Michael Dobbs identified with *Mouse to Mermaid* back in ANiMATO! #34. The writers attempt to take on the whole present Disney conglomerate - flippantly and misleadingly called 'the Mouse' - as if its diverse products, by belonging to one corporate entity and being controlled by identifiable high-level executives, thereby share traits and agendas. No defence of this assumption is offered.

From this starting point the authors 'reveal' that films like *KIDS* and *Pulp Fiction*, along with foul-mouthed music groups like Insane Clown Posse and the soft-porn cable service 'Hot Choice' are all - horrors! - 'Disney' products, in being owned or part-owned by the Disney company. Beyond the fact this is old news to anyone with a passing interest in Hollywood, I suspect most people will say, 'So what?' In an industry where all definitions are prefabricated, most people don't see a product as 'Disney' unless it has the fairy-tale castle or the words 'Walt Disney' stamped on it. (I'm not even sure about *Nightmare Before Christmas* and *Toy Story*.) Sure this is arbitrary, but so is writing a collection of articles about gutter-music, *Pocahontas* and *Pulp Fiction* and pretending it's a unified case.

To be fair, some parts of *Mouse Betrayed* make compelling reading. The strongest section is a lengthy piece on Disney World, bolstered by impressive on-the-



record testimony, which makes worrying claims about low safety standards, dubious administration, inadequate protection against child molesters and shocking staff abuse. A chapter on Disney licensees who use child labour is also worth reading, given the company's active support of UNICEF. And the account of Disney's dealings with China has several eye-openers, particularly the detail that Chinese Central Television consented to run WD programming in return for editorial control over dubbing. Thus Mickey Mouse shorts could be legitimately altered for ideological content, presumably allowing whole new ways of how - coining an infamous phrase - to read Donald Duck.

Unfortunately, much of the remainder is familiar or sloppy. A diatribe against Miramax and other subsidiaries is largely an excuse to retell the familiar rows over *KIDS* and *Powder*, while the moral tone was done better in Michael Medved's *Hollywood Vs America*. One description of a Peter Greenaway film is lifted straight from Medved's book, while there are several blatant errors in the text. (If Peter Jackson's brilliant *Heavenly Creatures* really endorses murder, as the writers insinuate, then *Schindler's List* is Nazi propaganda.) And this laziness pervades the section on animation.

There are three main chapters. The first is practically worthless, without context or analysis. The presentation of Walt's nephew Roy Disney as the true saviour of feature animation is interesting, but the argument is so condensed it's hard to judge.



Uncle Walt himself is presented as the guardian of Disney wholesomeness, in contrast to the suspect agendas of post-Eisner era. The rewrites of *Pinocchio* are cited entirely approvingly, giving some idea of the writers' stance. The 'incredibly dark and mature' subject-matter of *Hunchback* is decried: plainly the writers had forgotten the transformation in *Snow White*, Bald Mountain in *Fantasia*, the mother-killing in *Bambi* or, I'd argue, the whole of the short *Pluto's Judgment Day*. And if we're talking 'dark and weird' Disney films, why no mention of the stop-motions by Tim Burton and Henry Selick?

In similar vein the outgoing, 'sexually charged' heroines of new Disney are contrasted disapprovingly with the 'childlike, innocent' characters of yesteryear. As well as opening misogynist cans of worms, the writers seem to think overt sexuality is something new in popular animation. Perhaps some kind soul could direct them to early Betty Boop, Tex Avery's Red or Disney's Tinker Bell. The most convincing part of the argument - Disney's anti-parent, 'kids-know-best' subtext - is another Medved lift. The rest of the chapter is filler: accounts of *Roger Rabbit's* hidden frames, the Baptist allegations against *Mermaid*, *Aladdin* and *Lion King* ('S-E-X' in the clouds, etc.), all deflated by the admission that such things, even if true, go

back at least to Donald's four-letter quacks in *Clock Cleaners*. And what of the parallel arguments against classic Disney's hidden and not-so-hidden elements? Mickey's cruelty in *Steamboat Willie*? The Jewish stereotype in the original *Three Little Pigs*? The shoe-shining centaur in *Fantasia*? The...well, you get the idea.

The PC Princess' is a straight account of the conception of *Pocahontas*. The film's revisionism and inverted racism make it an easy target, but the writers fudge their case. The historical distortions are only mentioned in passing (strange, considering Hollywood Pictures' *Nixon* is later dissected), and there's nothing to show what differentiates *Pocahontas* from hundreds of more straightforwardly pernicious films. The writers conclude the film is an 'anthem about spiritualism, ecology and racism,' whereas Disney's core values used to be 'basic and simple.' And to think, all those schoolteachers who used to accuse Disney of dumbing kids' culture...Incidentally, the best Disney statement on racism was made in a film often regarded as bland and dumb, the pre-Eisner *Fox and the Hound*.

I was tempted to give up on 'The Lyin King' in disgust when I saw the writers were calling Japanese animation 'animae' - no, not a valid alternate spelling, just plain wrong - but it's not so bad. As the title suggests, it's an account of the *Simba/Lion*

*King* controversy. Most of the details will be familiar to anyone who's read ANIMATO! #30 or Frederik L. Schodt's *Dreamland Japan*, but some of the information was new to me, for instance that several *Lion King* animators attended Fred Patten's *Kimba* screenings in the '70s. My main gripe is the tabloid assertion that the Mouse 'stole (*Lion King*) from a dead Japanese animator,' whereas all Tezuka's camp claimed was that Disney hadn't acknowledged a major influence. Schodt's measured response, that 'the controversy is a case-study in cultural attitudes toward dispute resolution' (*Dreamland Japan*) is probably more accurate, but makes a less interesting tag to put on the dust-jacket.

In conclusion, *Mouse Betrayed* is a classic curate's egg, provocative allegations undermined by appalling sloppiness and lack of structure. (Even the conclusion is split between asserting that Disney goes for the money, and that it has a *Pocahontas*-style radical-revisionist agenda.) (Incidentally, anyone wanting a précis of the contents is recommended to 'The Tragic Kingdom,' the anti-Disney manifesto on the Concerned Women for America website. Not only is it the price of a phone call, it also has the virtue of not being three hundred pages long, at least half of those redundant.

-Andrew Osmond



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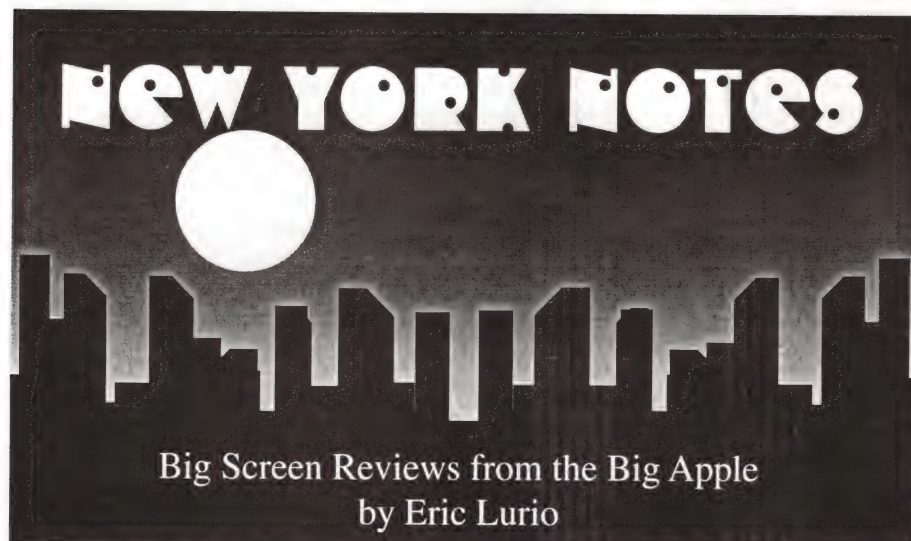
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First, let's look at the scorecard. World War Toon is progressing as expected. Since our last issue came out, we've had seven animated or primarily animated films released, that means there are lots of reviews, and the renaissance has all the appearances of turning into a glut. Since gluttony is one of my favorite sins, this is gonna be cool.

The hits were expected, and so were the flops. *Quest for Camelot*, reviewed here last issue, wound up with a domestic total of \$22,510,798, and was considered a major flop. The reason of course was that it had a huge promotional budget. Had it been given Warner's usual treatment, that amount would have been considered a hit.

Bill Plympton's *I Married a Strange Person*, reviewed here in issue 39, did far worse. True, it was in limited release, but it came and went with remarkable rapidity, only a couple of weeks in only a dozen theaters, and made only \$13,472. What Lion's Gate films was thinking when they were distributing this is beyond me.

Now for the veritable smorgasbord that are the theatrical releases that we're going to review here and now:

Disney's *Mulan* \$120,296,555 (as of 10/18/98) Directed by Barry Cook & Tony Bancroft.

It's an annual event. Disney comes out with it's latest animated extravaganza and all the critics say how wonderful it is, but gee, it's not as good as *Beauty and the Beast* or *Aladdin*. Then a few months later, it's pronounced a failure because it didn't make as much money as *The Lion King*.

Okay, this time it is as good as *Beauty and the Beast* or *Aladdin*. Disney's best in five years.

Fa Mulan is a marriageable teen living sometime during one of the two first millenniums, and we first see her writing a crib

sheet on her arm so she pass muster with the matchmaker later that day.

Her parents are almost in despair. Mulan is a klutz and to make matters worse, Mulan's Granny has given her an unlucky lucky cricket. The expected mayhem ensues, and this time[unlike, say most animated features recently] is hilarious.

MEANWHILE...

The Huns are attacking. They breach the great wall in a really nifty computer enhanced scene, and the evil Shan Yu makes his presence known by climbing it sans ropes (all the other Huns have them, which is how you know they're breaching the wall in the first place).

The Emperor understandably concerned, issues a country-wide draft call. One draftee per family.

moted family guardian dragon, isn't, and thinking it's the best way to get his old job back, he decides, is to make Mulan a war hero[ine].

What follows is basically a semi-remake of Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*.

The supporting characters are great, and B.D.Wong and Donny Osmond give real life to Ruben Aquino's masterful drawings of Captain Li Shang, who doesn't become the love interest until the closing credits.

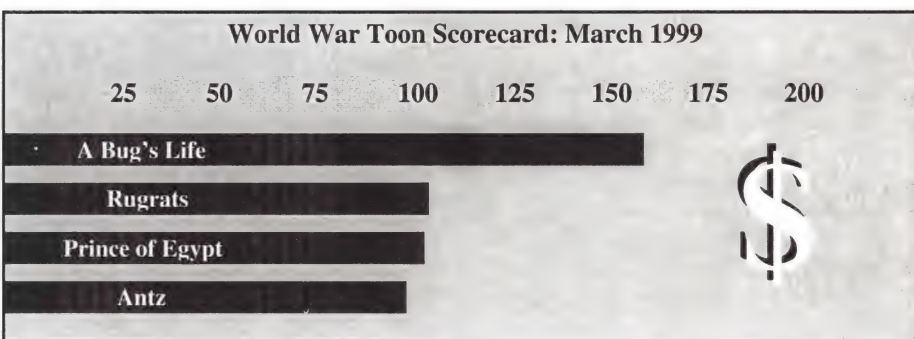
The figures show that this film is the beginning of what may be Disney's second comeback. We'll have to see.....

Next, we have what may or may not be considered an animated film. It's primarily live action. DreamWorks' first foray into field of licencing fodder....Joe Dante's *Small Soldiers* \$54,349,697 (as of 10/18/98) Sometimes horror movies are too ludicrous to be believed. This is one of them. This had everything, a great director, perfect cast, lots of production value and what we've got is either...it's kind of hard to explain...

The evil military hardware magnate Gil Mars has bought up the Heartland Toys corporation and orders designers Larry Benson and Irwin Wayfair to come up with a new superdeluxe set of action figures (let's face it they were always doll for boys) that would actually do stuff that was shown on the commercials.

Having been given "the run of the store," Benson comes across some super powerful artificial intelligence chips from the guided missile division of the conglomerate.

So we've got the Commando Elite®,



Unfortunately, Mulan is an only child. Not wanting to lose her aged (and slightly crippled) father, our heroine decides to disguise herself as a man and go in his place.

The Ancestors are furious, so they send the great stone dragon to get her back. Unfortunately, the great stone dragon is only made of stone, but Mushu the de-

programmed to be macho and always win, and the Gorgonites®, ugly and programmed to lose.

Alan Abernathy is a recovering psychopath and high school freshman, who's minding his father's toy store and his own business, when Joe the truck driver (Dick Miller) comes to deliver the weeks shipment. Seeing the nifty new do...action figures, he



convinces Joe to drop off a set with the promise he'd sell them by the time his father gets back from his "how to succeed in business." seminar. Dad hates war toys.

While he's setting up the display, Alan meets Christy Fimple, his next door neighbor, with whom he falls head over heels in love with.

Around this time, he turns on the lead dolls, Major Chip Hazard and Archer emissary of the Gorgonites. The fight immediately begins.

Major Hazard activates his commandos and this activates The Gorgonites. The fun and games begin.

Gerald Gutschmidt, Eric Matson and company do a great job with the computer animation, and the Stan Winston Studios provide animatronic puppetry where things have to appear more "realistic."

In other words, the special effects are brilliant. Pity you can't say the same for the live action cast. Phil Hartman, Ann Magnuson, Robert Picardo and Wendy Schaal are all wonderful actors who are given little to do but scream and play tennis.

On the other hand, this is 75% cartoon and Dante lets the cartoon characters hog the screen as much as they like.

Which they do. It's all pretty harmless until they start harming people. Then it gets scary.

The commando elite uses a microchip from one of their fallen comrades to bring to life Christy's Gwendy doll collection. The sight of a hundred Gwendys (this is Hasbro, Barbie is Mattel) swarming over Christy like a bunch of piranha or army ants is not only scary, it's gross.

By the time it's over the whole thing is a bit of a mess, a big, ugly cross between *Terminator 3* and Dante's *Gremlins*.

And they're marketing this to little children, who loved the toys but didn't go see the movie. This is considered DreamWorks' first flop.

So they then brought out the big guns and ambush Disney just like Disney did when they delayed *Mighty Joe Young* six months to open the same day with *Prince of Egypt*...

Antz \$90,646,554 (as of 3/18/99)  
Directed by Eric Darnell, Larry Guterman and Tim Johnson  
This is it. DreamWorks has finally brought out the big guns. Pacific Data

Images, the oldest computer graphics firm in the world has come out with it's first, and the very second fully computer generated feature film ever to come out. Wow.

The people at PDI were playing around with this concept long before Katzenberg left Disney. Of course he was more than happy to give it the go ahead once he found out that Pixar was going to come out with it's bug epic the same day as Katz's dream project, *Prince of Egypt*.

That this thing was going to come out six months ahead of the announced schedule and nobody knew until the last minute is a tribute to both the ingenuity of PDI and the excellent internal security of DreamWorks. Revenge is cool when done right.

Eric Darnell and Tim Johnson have designed a really nifty universe here, something that lets you suspend disbelief with no trouble at all, and digital puppeteers Ramon Hoi, Rex Grignon, Denis Cuouchon, Sean Curron and Donnachada Daly add movement that seems completely natural. Even the facial expressions look dead on.

The film begins like what it is. A Woody Allen movie. Z-1948 (voice:Woody Allen) is complaining to his shrink (Paul Mazursky)

about how he never got any attention from his mother — middle child in a family of six million—and how insignificant he feels. "Breakthrough!" says the shrink, "You're an ant, you're supposed to feel insignificant!" The "camera" then pans out the window to a completely new computer generated world of seemingly infinite detail.

Z continues to whine in the patented Woody Allen way (Kenneth Branagh tries in Allen's *Celebrity* but just can't get it right) first to his coworker Azteca, then later on at the bar with his soldier pal Weaver. While Z is contemplating sucking beer from the rear end of an aphid, he hears from an old drunk (John Mahoney) about a place called "Insectopia" where he could escape his dreary life. Then, all of a sudden, Princess Bala (Sharon Stone) comes in slumming through the door. They dance, and romantically fall...you get the idea.

The music is eclectic. One would ex-

pect the soldier ants to sing "The Ants are Marching Two By Two" as they go off to battle, but Woody Allen singing "It's almost like being in love" while his digital doppelganger does a Gene Kelly impression is a little much.

This being a cartoon, the people at PDI can get away with stuff like that, and even more. After the big battle with the termites Z finds his buddy Barbatus mortally wounded. You can tell by the fact all that's left of him is his head. This ain't Disney, that's for sure.

The rest of the voice cast is stellar. Gene Hackman is great as the evil General Mandible as is Christopher Walken as his main flunky Cutter. Dan Aykroyd and Jane Curtin are very droll as a pair of very WASPy yellow jackets. Anne Bancroft is given a small role as the queen.

What's best about this is the fact that the story is engaging. The three dimensional animation gives the film a live action look, and that makes the characters more real. Also, as this is 100% special effects, the animators could produce gags based on perspective that are breathtaking.

Next on the list is the feeble *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*—\$56,567 (as of 10/18/98), which is Goodtimes Video's first attempt at respectability.

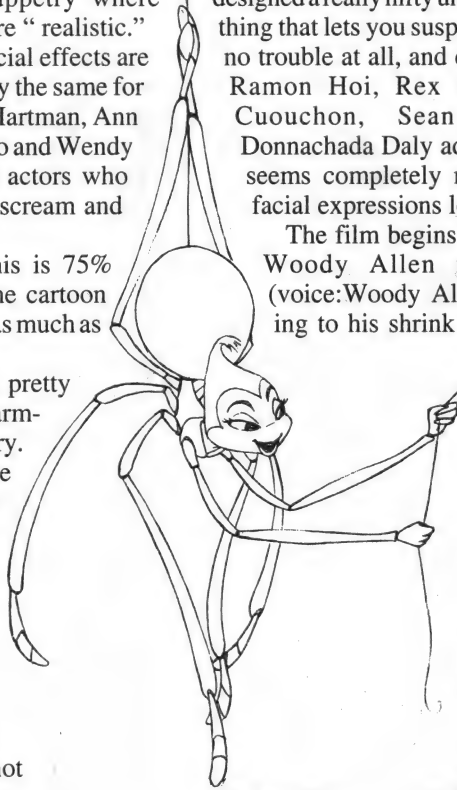
Bill Kowalchuck is someone we should all loathe. He's one of those people who do those atrocious cheapo Disney knockoffs designed to fool parents into thinking it's the real thing, causing thousands of innocent kiddies to burst into tears when they've discovered that they've been had. On the other hand, he does hire people, and with the contraction in the industry nowadays, those in the business need all the résumé they can get.

Using some computers and about 400-odd animators, Kowalchuck's Tundra productions managed to knock this thing out in less than six months. Quite an achievement, really, because it doesn't look as cheesy as was feared.

It's a colorless tale with bland songs and uninspired artwork, standard workaday Christmas special that thanks to the superior (for them) production values and a couple of celebrity voices. (hey, work's work, and there's no heavy lifting) is almost watchable.

The idea to give it a theatrical release of a week to get reviews for the back of the video box didn't work for any of the other lousy DTVs and I'm pretty sure that it's not going to help this thing either.

The New York Comedy Film Festival hosted the world theatrical premier of another DTV, *Simba's Pride*—Directed by



© Disney PIXAR



Darrel Rooney. A few years back, when some schmuck at Disney TV came up with the idea that direct to video sequels of beloved movies could make money, many purists were aghast. Not only because these things usually fail, but that as films, they were markedly worse than the original and in doing so ruined the fond memory of the original films.

I've done my best to avoid these blots on the cinema, but with this one, there was a nagging question: how can they do this to their biggest blockbuster without looking totally mercenary?

Well, they can't. But Disney TV (Australia) can try to make it as close to feature quality as possible. What comes out is something both interesting and bizarre.

What we've got here is a backstory that screams to be told but is too adult for the format. Adultery is something that no one would expect to see in a Disney cartoon, especially a direct to video sequel.

What is alluded to but never seen, is that during the interval between the death of Scar and the last scene of the first film, Simba (Matthew Broderick) kicked out his aunt Zira (Suzanne Pleshette) and her three cubs Nuka (Andy Dick), Kovu (Adam Wylie), and Sarafina (Zoe Leader)... not to mention about half of the pride as it was....Also before Simba did this Zira was having an affair with another lion. We're told that several times that Kovu isn't Scar's son.

So when Simba's daughter Kiara (Lacey Chabert) goes out to play overprotective dad sends a totally wasted Timon (Nathan Lane) and Pumbaa (Ernie Sabella) to watch over her and inevitably meets Kovu, there's something we've never seen before in any Disney cartoon: the hero becoming a villain. It's a brilliant idea, but it doesn't really work.

The rest of the flick is basically Romeo and Juliette meets Pocahontas.

The now adult Kiara (Neve Campbell) and Kovu (Jason Marsden) trying to smooth things out between the two opposing sides. [the bad lions discover how to set fires, and Kovu saves Kiara....it's very complicated].

The reason it's that way is because it's supposed to come out as a regular movie in much of the world. The music's okay and the animation is really good. But I'm not sure the kiddies would take to it as they did the first one.

That's it before the holiday rush. In the Holiday season we have a minimum of three very major releases (*Rugrats*, *A Bug's Life*, and *Prince of Egypt*), and considering that *Antz* is going to hang around for at least another month, we've got the best selec-

tion in the history of the medium. Then there's that pesky rumor that Disney's *Tarzan* is going to come out seven months early...



The Pharaoh from *Prince of Egypt*  
© DreamWorks

### Prince of Egypt

Directed by Brenda Chapman,  
Steve Hickner and Simon Wells

It's always a mistake to begin anything with an apology. But that's how this review begins. Sorry....this is not exactly the way it is in Exodus. Like we didn't know earlier. Rabbis have been doing that sort of thing for millennia, it's called midrash, and it's produced some truly great religious literature.... and they have to apologize for it? Sheesh!

We then are taken on a tour of the landscape. Hebrew slaves sing a song of woe as we see what might be called a 2 1/2 D, there is depth here. The virtual camera goes in and out of the trees and buildings and we see a slightly cartoony group of pharaonic soldiers barging into Hebrew houses with sickles. Why are they doing this? This is one of the few films in recent years that assumes the viewer has read the

book.

Yocheved, Moses' mother flees with the baby into the underbrush with her older son Aaron and daughter Miriam, who follows the famous basket as it goes past several dangers on its way to the pharaonic palace so our hero can be adopted by the Queen. This is an extraordinary piece of animation. The trip down the Nile looks, at times, like an animated oil painting. It's really stunning what they can do with computers now.

The cut to the next scene is done without titles, which is a little jarring as a couple of decades have passed. Moses and Rameses are young men now, and while the dialogue is pretty banal, the artwork is reminiscent of one of those simulators you sometimes see in theme parks. They pretty much destroy the temple complex, which brings a rebuke by the current Pharaoh, and his two comic relief flunkies Hotep and Huy. These two, being pagan and not subjecting the studio to outraged pressure groups, are by far the most fun characters in the whole film.

Then our hero discovers his real nature while following a would-be concubine named Tziporah and her comic relief camel. He meets the now-grown Miriam and Aaron. Goldblum's voicing of Aaron like the characterizations of several of the supporting characters, are rather abrupt and cursory, which to some extent hurts the movie.

Just as it seems that the film is about to bog down, there's a wonderful dream sequence based on hieroglyphics. This looks not like a cartoon, but live action almost. Truly eye popping.

After this Rameses and Moses are sketched by Dave Brewster and Kristof Serrand. This may have been a time saving device, one can't be sure, but the whole thing is pretty seamless. One thing which is strange is what they do with the voices. Kilmer can sing just fine, and in fact has in at least two movies, but they give the songs to Amick Byram. Fiennes gets to sing for himself. Also, Danny Glover is only given a couple of lines as our hero's perspective father-in-law, Jethero. Brian Mitchell sings 90% of the part, why couldn't he have done the couple of extra speaking lines?

The rest of the film is a spectacle. Like *Titanic* we already know the ship is going to sink. The burning bush is done in a way that is truly magical. Hotep and Huy are given the best number in the film, and plagues are really creepy, single-handedly pushing this film out of G rated-territory. The angel of death is especially nasty. This is cool.



Finally, there's the parting of the Red Sea, which is the film's tour de force. This alone will get an Oscar nod for special effects. The bar here was set very high. This was meant to be the greatest animated film ever made. It's not. But it's in the top three, and that's well worth the price of admission.

**Doug's First Movie**  
Directed by Maurice Joyce

About a year ago, when it became clear that *The Rugrats Movie* was going to be completed, the people at Disney decided



Doug Funnie © Disney

that it might be worthwhile for one of their wholly owned subsidiaries, Jumbo pictures, to produce a direct-to-video feature version of a cartoon Jumbo had made for Nickelodeon prior to its purchase. A colorless, harmless thing called *Doug*.

*Doug* is sort of like *Peanuts* grown up a bit to junior high. The hero, Doug Funnie (voice of Thomas McHugh) is an eleven or twelve-year-old who lives in a place called Bluffington, hangs out with his pal Skeeter (Fred Newman) and his dog Porkchop (also

Fred Newman) and is madly in love with Patti Mayonnaise (Connie Shulman). The main design innovation was that everybody was a different color, and that Porkchop was a bit of a funny animal. All in all it wasn't bad. A totally harmless show, and most important, popular with the kiddies.

When Disney bought Jumbo a few years back former put a slightly revamped version on its Saturday morning lineup on ABC, where it did relatively decently. Then *Rugrats* became the surprise hit of the holiday season. So the Disney brass told Jumbo president Jim Jenkins that the DTV "special episode" they and Korea's Plus One Animation, Inc. were making was going to be an actual theatrical release. After all, if one Nicktoon could make it...

The result is not the worst episode of the series, nor is by any means the best. What it is is a bland little trifle about the valentine's day dance and a lovable monster named Herman Melville (Frank Welker) living in the lake. The problem is, among other things, that if you haven't seen the show before, you won't be able to enjoy it. It's like turning on the TV in the middle of a drama or sitcom you are unfamiliar with. Unless it's really good, you can't really get into it. As it was originally designed to be direct to video, it was not designed to be enjoyed by parents like *Rugrats* was. Unless you're a fan of the series, then this is definitely not for you. It may say Disney on the poster, but it's not. I doubt very much that there will be a theatrical version of *Doug's Second Movie*.

**The Rugrats Movie**  
Directed by Igor Kovalyov and Norton Virgien

With feature cartoons, it helps to have a brand name, and boy does this thing have a brand name!

*Rugrats* is Nickelodeon's flagship cartoon, known and loved by more kids than Mickey Mouse or Bugs Bunny, or so the polls say. The screening was full of kids all the way up to eleven or so, and they all knew who was who and what was what. There's an audience for this thing.

Directors Igor Kovalyov and Norton Virgien and chief sketchers Neil Katz, Duk-Kyu Chang and Jason Arena lead their trusty hoard of Korean artists on a mission to get something that moves as well as Disney's stuff but looks absolutely nothing like it.

What they got is an hour and a half episode that moves so fast and furious that it seems like a third of the time.



© Nickelodeon

For those who don't have cable: Aged Lou Pickles (Joe Alaskey) lives with his son Stu (Jack Riley), Stu's pregnant wife Didi (Melanie Chartoff) and their 18-month son Tommy (Elizabeth Daily). To pick up an extra buck, Stu being an inventor type who doesn't have all that much income, the Pickles babysit neighbors Phil and Lil DeVille (Kath Soucie) and Chuckie Finster (Christine Cavanaugh), as well as older cousin Angelica (Cheryl Chase), who is the villain of the group.

The movie opens with a parody of the opening of "Raiders of the Lost Ark. The extra money shows on screen. This ain't no TV show!

The plot is something like this: Didi goes into labor during the baby shower, and everybody goes to the ritzy birthing center. The babies have been brought along and go looking for Tommy's new sibling, who they think is in the "baby store." Finding something like that, we are treated to an all star punker reunion jamboree (musical director Mark Mothersbaugh was lead singer of Devo) that ends in a glorious fountain of urine. It's beautiful!

Having brought baby "Dil" (Tara Charendoff) home from the hospital, Tommy feels ignored. The other babies don't like Dil because he cries all the time. But Dad is inventing a new motorized wagon, and somehow the kids manage to accidentally take it out of the house and on to a grand and dangerous adventure that includes wolves, waterfalls and monkeys.

David Spade, Whoopi Goldberg, Tim Curry, Phil Proctor and Tress MacNielle add their voices as various adults, and this adds to the humor of the piece. But remember, this is not a date movie, this is best enjoyed if you are already familiar with the characters.

-Eric Lurio







# EVAN'S INDIE CORNER



by Evan Backes

*Introducing a new column dedicated to independent animated film*

## **One Day a Man Bought a House** (Huset På Kampen) Pjotr Sapegin

To understand the medium of animation, a filmmaker must purvey his visions through a form of art, but most importantly, must be able to tell a story that provides insight without the use of dialogue. There are of course exceptions to the rule, but overall, the most intriguing cinematic perfections can convey meaning through animation alone. Few films come to mind — Christoph and Wolfgang Lauenstein's *Balance*, Stephen Palmer's *Blindscape*, and Michael Dudok de Wit's *The Monk and the Fish* — that have exemplified filmmaking excellence, and the animated short I am going to speak of, Pjotr Sapegin's *One Day a Man Bought a House*, borders that line of virtue.

Pjotr Sapegin is one of the few animation surrealists of his time, bringing forth great meaning and truth through unconventional methods of storytelling. His films demonstrate what animation does best, it changes a surreal idea into a plausible one. Whether it was his earlier films such as *Mons the Cat* or his most recent, *One Day a Man Bought a House*, Sapegin consistently delineates fiction into perfect logic. His trademarked multi-layering technique brings great depth to his films including the arrangement of lights and darks to create an environment that best suits his characters appearance. Sapegin utilizes a number of strategic edits to make up for the lack of camera movements, but proves to us (with a couple of gorgeous panning shots) that animation can be shot as if it were a live-action film.

*One Day a Man Bought a House* and was welcomed by an unfriendly rodent who lived in the cellar all alone. The man used every possible method of extermination to get rid of the rat from the house — rat poison, a bear trap, and a Malaysian pitbull-cat delivered with a kill guarantee — but the creature looked at these entrapments as gifts for sharing his love. "Little me, who has been so lonely? He must really like me. But I am so ugly - and so fat. He loves me! It is simple as that," quoth the rat. But one day, the man decided to leave the house, and it was then that the rat reached with her arms and declared her love for the man, and they got married. As bizarre as it sounds, Pjotr's unconventional manner of storytelling yields great recognition for the art of fantasy and humor.

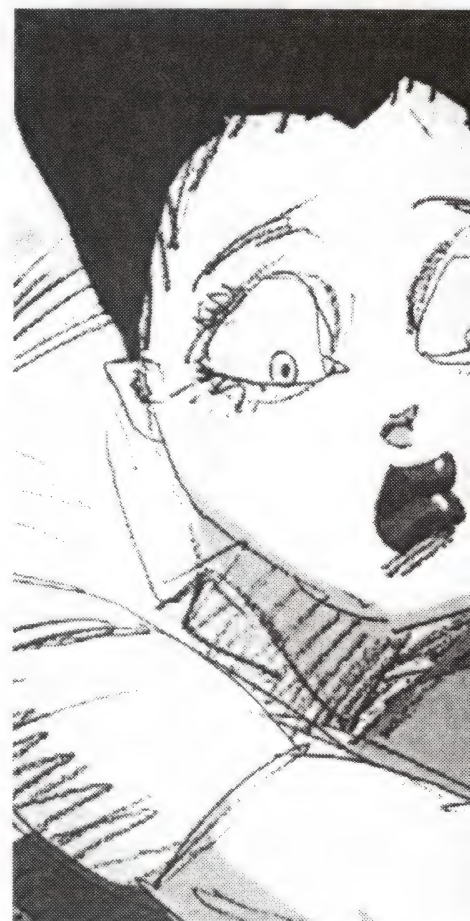
I was fortunate enough to view this film at first without the English translation of the Norwegian dialogue. Upon reading the translation, I found that the story is as strong, or even stronger without the narrator dictating the characters actions. The scenes create its own depth, especially the shots within the cellar of a damp and cold environment with blacks and whites swirling through a magnificent gray mist. Sapegin possesses a true style for claymation, unlike anything we've ever seen before, and significantly different from the works of the Aardman creators. *One Day a Man Bought a House* is a gem of flawless shape and beauty and provides a surreal outlook into the imagination of animation.

## **I Married a Strange Person** Bill Plympton

Sex, violence, and dullness. Three words that quickly summarize Bill Plympton's newest full featured animated film, *I Married a Strange Person*.

The seventy-five minute film is Plympton's second animated feature, the

first was the 1993 G-rated musical, *The Tune. I Married a Strange Person* is far from the children-friendly G rating; although the film is rated R, it truly belongs closer to the NC-17 rating. The gratuitous sex scene (one in particular, you'll know which one) is the trigger for the high rating, with the most outlandish sexual innuendo that could possibly be imagined. This is not to say it's on the brink of porno. Oh, no, you'll be bawling with laughter!



As you would have expected, the film starts out with a sex scene--between two birds amid high altitudes, who, after a few minutes of intense bird-action, are dis-



tracted and crash into the satellite dish of freelance accountant, Grant Boyer. This causes radiated beams to zap the him in the back of the neck, germinating a lobe which gives him supernatural illusionary powers. Soon after, his newly married wife, Kelly, finds out about his freakish nature and begins to worry about their marriage. So, she complains to her parents, and soon after, both Grant and Kelly visit his in-laws, in one of the most drudgely tedious scenes of the film.

Plympton's ideas were right on target, but his executions failed miserably. The scene was to portray a typical dull family eating dinner where nobody has anything to say, but Plympton took it to a bitter extreme, quickly pulling the movie away from its "ultra funny" slogan.

Don't worry, it picks up - for about 5 minutes. Within this five-minute interlude, the newlyweds engage in one of the funniest sex scenes ever on film. Even the household appliances go at it. After that, the film switches gears and changes to an action/



© 1999 Bill Plympton

adventure flick that is packed with eye-popping violence, and I'm afraid to say it, but more dullness. To give light upon Grant's supernatural powers (and not on

the story), Grant envisions a single blade of grass attempting to kill a greedy neighbor, who enjoys torturing his lawn by mowing it to the brink of nothingness. That's not to forget Grant's television appearance on the Jackie Jason Show to act out his illusionary powers. In a blend of immature humor and shock violence, we steer towards the long haul. Keep in mind we're only at the thirty-five minute mark, and we've still got a tiring forty minutes left.

Media mogul, Larson Giles, the brain behind SmilesCorp Network, discovers Grants' powers after watching his stunt on the Jackie Jason Show. Giles, who is saturated with would-be writers and low ratings, decides to send out his army to capture Grant, but more specifically his lobe. Although there are a few memorable moments, I can't understand why Plympton wanted to stretch the plot, only to display stale violent scenes and half-ass humor.

At about the one hour mark, one will easily give up on this film, giving little concern to whether or not Grant saves his marriage, and if Giles becomes the king of media. As Plympton stated in a recent interview, he believes the film didn't have enough sex in it. And he's right. Not because we want to get excited by his explicit drawings, we want to barrel out tears of laughter, because sex is Plympton's best attribute.

Keep in mind while reading this review that Plympton drew the entire 75 minute film himself, a lingering fact that makes me want to take back any criticizing comment. Although this is quite an impressive fact, it really shows. Many shots are shown repeatedly, and a number of them are still frames. Plympton covers this up by using a LOT of camera movements, which slows the film down greatly. By far the most annoying aspect of the entire feature is Plympton's camera angles to avoid drawing the speakers' mouth.

With back-shots, silhouettes, and body parts in front of the mouth, the voice tends to fall flat with no emotion, a problem that drags the films excitement. Even when the camera is on the speaker, Plympton does a terrible job of forming the lips to make words look like its coming out natural. This baffles me because Bill has shown in many of his previous films that he can perfectly animate a person speaking.

I'd like to add that the animation is beautifully done, the old Plympton style of jagged lines and scratchy features is purely classic. When the action is pumping,

Plympton captures the moment with fantastic camera angles, a characteristic that Plympton has approved upon greatly

in this film.

After years and years of enjoying Bill Plympton's cartoons, we've come to a point where we expect so much from him, and every time his performance rises to a new level. Plympton excels at short animated films, including his most recent, the 1997 short, *Sex and Violence* which sums up a lot of the scenes in *I Married a Strange Person*, but in a 9 minute form. With *I Married a Strange Person* he took a step forwards and then a step backwards.

The independent animation genius is still one of the best out there, but I already miss his old work.



T.R.A.N.S.I.T  
Piet Kroon

Animating Picasso's masterful drawings and thoughts is a formidable venture that director/writer Piet Kroon has secretly reflected into his latest film, *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* As Pablo revolutionized the idea of modern art, *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* is revolutionizing the art form that is animation. With the initial view of attenuated compassion, each shot is full of deep tragedy, a form of idealism that is carried throughout Picasso's work. If you take a look at Picasso's famed pieces, specifically the ones that portray jigsaw faces, in a subtle tone, *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* also fashions these drawing designs. At first glance, Picasso's work illustrates an initial lack of depth (physically, not mentally), like a portrait of a two-dimensional flatworld that focuses on vibrant colors and directs your eyes to the appealing center, as does *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* A deeper look into each artists' work will offer deeper





A frame from the Amsterdam segment of *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.*

© IFC/PS

meaning, an ingenious control over one's art. Tragedy is a conception that can only be conveyed through the deepest visual images, not necessarily in auditory terms, which both *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* (having no dialogue) and Picasso's masterpieces have achieved.

The journey of *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* is a collage of seven artists, each set out to animate different areas of the world (Amsterdam, Baden Baden, St. Tropez, Cairo, Venice, aboard the Orient Express and the S.S. l'Amerique du Dud) in which the characters travel, signaled by stickers that reveal their past journeys. Since all artists have such a unique style and comprehension of art, it is hard to believe that *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* could have ever flowed in a mutual tone, but it does. Each segment of the film paints a palette of unique style and feel, setting a mood that allows the film to flow as one.

The story unfolds in a backwards manner, leaving us the effects before being told the causes. Without paying careful attention, the film can be easily misunderstood, a second viewing is a vital process behind Kroon's vision. In the opening scene, we find an elegant woman by the name of Emmy who is surprisingly disturbed by a washed out fellow who is aboard the same ship to America. As we later find out by backtracking through the young ladies trials and tribulations during the 1920s, she had been caught in a love triangle with two other men, Oscar and Felix (the man aboard the ship).

You will be whisked away by the films exquisite score by Julian Nott, that delicately fills the gap of the absent dialogue.

woman in the early twentieth century, but a deep look inside reveals a painting that could only be sketched by Picasso himself.

### *Un Jour* (One Day)

Marie Paccou

To venture within the mind and thoughts of an animator is an arduous and risky task to embark upon, because, like a painting, the words of the artiste are the only true rationale. At times, the visuals are lucid and obvious, but with others, the reasoning behind the drawings are an adventure all its own. The art critic assumes the position of the palette, and frequently clashes the colors together to create an supposition that is biased and out of touch with the artist's purposes.

This is how Marie Paccou's *Un Jour* fits into the picture. *Un Jour* is a story of a woman who was raped by a 3-foot-tall dwarf who struggled with organ transfer and ultimately left her after stealing her stomach. At first, *Un Jour* has the convictions of a deep film, but instead, it's an exposé of art, discrediting all esoteric ideas. I was able to carry out a couple of interesting conversations with Marie about her film, and she summed up her feelings of the critic by saying, "people always expect me to tell them (in order to feel more secure?) pathetic stories about my life. I think the film doesn't need too many comments as everybody feels what it's talking about."

She mentioned that a number of people imposed their ideas as a personal stab towards her life, such as the idea that she had

The music draws the viewer to the story, creating a sense of focus within the film. It also supports the dramatic impression of tragedy, that gives *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* its mental depth.

On the surface, *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.* is a tragic film about the life of a young

a long-term boyfriend who died suddenly in a dramatic accident or underwent a traumatizing abortion. When art was created, so was the critic, and along with that comes postulates that can effect an artists' reason for composing the medium.

*Un Jour* is Marie Paccou's first short animated film and already she has shown her remarkable ability of creating unique animated environments utilizing untraditional means of animation. *Un Jour* was made with a French 2-D software called, "Tic-Tac-Toon," a vectorial "zero-paper" software that isn't typically used for the type of animation Marie developed. Although the film is done on computer, it's done in a very traditional manner, frame by frame, except Marie was "scratching" a tablet with a digital pen to retain hand-made quality. *Un Jour* has a quaint ambience that is beautifully executed through blacks and whites in a scratchboard style that resembles a network of animated silhouettes.

Marie Paccou is currently working on her second film titled, *Quand tu Dors* or *When One Sleeps* and I had the chance to see the film in its preliminary stages of post-production. Marie writes, "any compliment about *Un Jour* makes it somehow even harder to achieve the new film. Rationally speaking, it's completely unfair!" So I hope for Marie's sake, I haven't applauded *Un Jour* too much, because I wouldn't want to make the excruciating process of animation any harder than it is.



Evan Backes jumps into ANiMATO! with his first column on independent animation. You can usually find Evan at his website Stay Tooned, which is packed with information and reviews. Check it out at <http://www.staytooned.com>







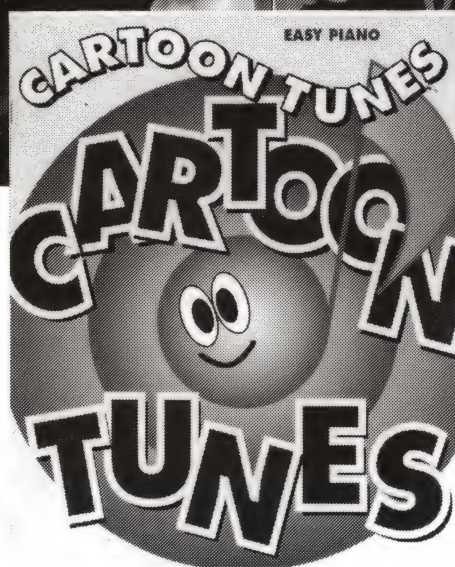
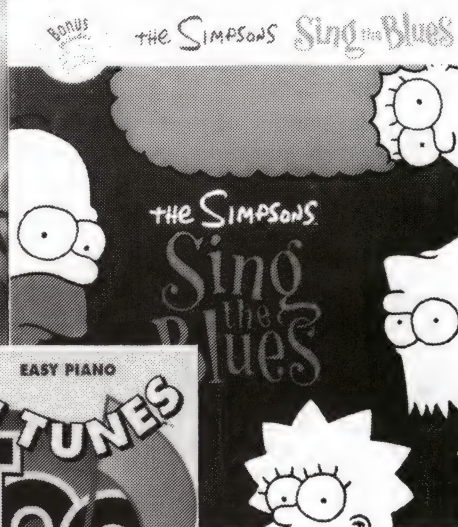
## Sheet Music Compilations

Old and new sheet music can be a great source of information and entertainment. We'll save discussing the vintage sheet music for a future column and focus on recent sheet music compilations.

Some of the new compilations are specific to one animated film (*Simba's Pride* or *Rudolf The Red-Nosed Reindeer*), from a TV series (*The Simpsons*), or simply a collection of various animated themes like *Cartoon Tunes*.

Ranging in price from \$9.95 to \$16.95 they offer fans a collectible package of art and music. While I'm a big fan of *The Simpsons*, my favorite book in this bunch is the generic looking *Cartoon Tunes*. Don't be fooled by the cover. All the studios are represented with original words and music. Inside you'll find themes from *The Flintstones*, *Popeye*, *Casper*, *Little Lulu*, *Huckleberry Hound*, *Rocky and Bullwinkle*, *Felix*, *Betty Boop*, *Chip 'n Dale's Rescue Rangers*, *Ducktales*, *Top Cat*, *Woody Woodpecker*, *The Jetsons*, *Bugs Bunny* and *Magilla Gorilla*.

Put that old piano in the limelight at your next animation soirée. My wife played *Casper The Friendly Ghost* in a rollicking, rolling tempo on our piano and it was like (insert cliché) I was hearing it for the first time. --Patrick Duquette

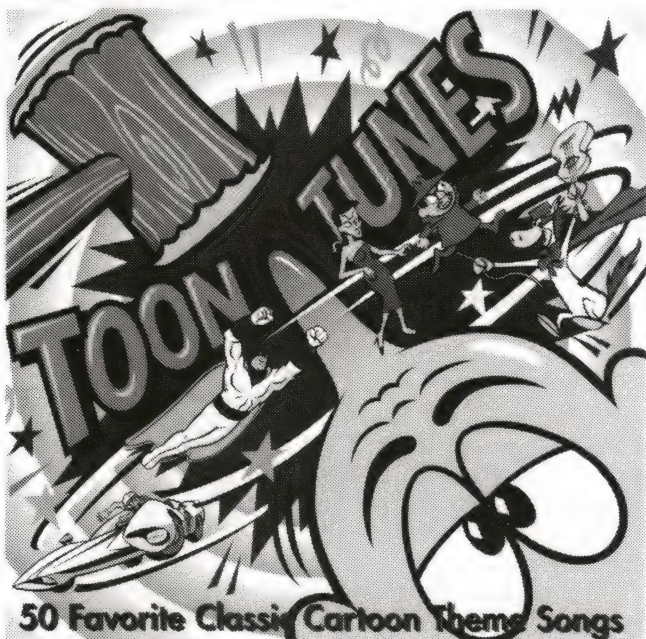


HAL • LEONARD

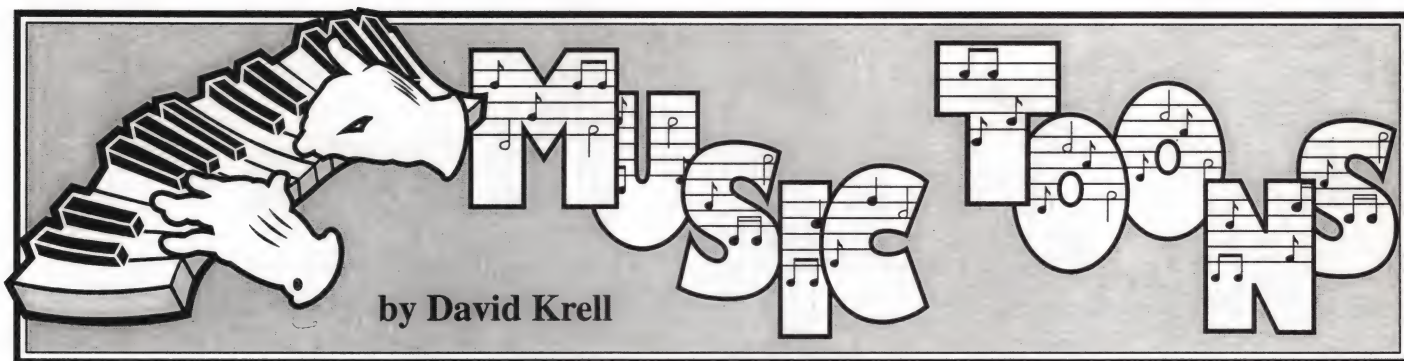
### Toon Tunes: Fifty Favorite Classic Cartoon Theme Songs Kid Rhino CD R2 73752

Here's something you don't see everyday, Clancy. Kid Rhino has compiled fifty—count 'em: 50 — of the best cartoon themes on one CD. Running the gamut from Ruff and Reddy to Ren and Stimpy, animaphiles will find an embarrassment of riches in these long-forgotten themes. There are a few puzzling choices—why open with the offputting original Popeye theme and William Costello's murmuring and chuckling—especially on an album for Kid Rhino—instead of the more accessible later renditions? Greg Ehrbar also makes the occasional faux pas on the liner notes, referring to "Pat Sullivan's" Felix the Cat (surely we say Otto Mesmer's now). Minor cavils aside however, this delightfully retro collection will have cartoon lovers singing in the shower, and dancing down memory lane.

-Gord Wilson







## Bugs Bunny: Classical Musicomedy

*Bugs Bunny's Overtures to Disaster* presents classical music in the context of classic cartoon comedy. Five selections orchestrate a melodic theme for *Bugs*



*Bunny's Under the Stars Concert* where anything can happen, especially with Bugs conducting the orchestra. And in true Looney Tunes form, anything does.

CBS aired *Overtures* on April 17, 1991 as part of its "Toon Night" anthology programming, combining new Warner Brothers animation with classic sequences. *Variety* reviewed *Overtures* for its April 19, 1991 edition. "CBS 'Toon Night' animation anthology kicks off with an uneven Bugs Bunny special that, as usual, dramatizes the vast gulf that exists between the classic Warner Bros. animation and what's coming out today. But the gulf is narrowing, as the energy and ambition of WB's *Tiny Toons* start to rub off on these primetime compilation efforts."

Two selections probably entrenched in the memory of anyone who grew up watching Bugs Bunny cartoons (and that's just about everyone!) repeat in *Overtures* —

*The Rabbit of Seville* (Looney Tunes, 1950) and *What's Opera, Doc?* (Merrie Melodies, 1957). Gioachino Antonio Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and Richard Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* (a.k.a. Kill the Wabbit!) set the tone for both pieces respectively.

Animator Chuck Jones' appreciation for the depth of classical music and the challenges therein for the animator manifest in *What's Opera, Doc?*. Jones indicates a true appreciation for the art form, taking steps to ensure the animation matches the quality of classical music. Steve Schneider explains further in *That's All Folks: The Art of Warner Brothers Animation* (Henry Holt and Company, 1988).

"But Jones' relationship to classical music is not, at bottom, satirical; rather, he often seems awed by its grandeur, and seeks to share in that glow. And nowhere is this more evident than in 1957's *What's Opera, Doc?* In this tour de force, Jones compressed the entirety of Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* — a cycle of four operas that is fourteen hours long — into six minutes, and threw in heavy doses of *Fantasia*-bashing besides."

Schneider also details the effort to make *What's Opera, Doc?*

"By any standards this is an extraordinary cartoon, and for one made as late as 1957 it seems something of a miracle. In fact, Jones knew he was undertaking an unusual work, and so stole two weeks of production time from his other cartoons to lavish more attention on *What's Opera, Doc?* — thereby having all of seven weeks to devote to it. Whereas a typical cartoon might use about sixty different shots, *What's Opera, Doc?* required 106."

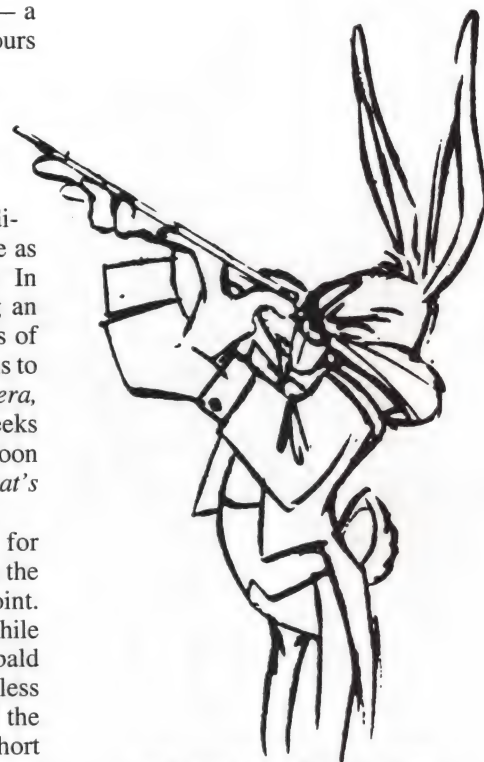
Jones also used classical music for laughs. *The Rabbit of Seville* utilizes the barber theme to its utmost humor point. Bugs' nonchalant look at the audience while using his feet to massage Elmer's bald head to the music's beat is nothing less than hysterical. Indeed, Jones mined the genre for satire in *Seville* and another short not seen in *Overtures*, *Long-Haired Hare*

(Looney Tunes, 1949), featuring our favorite rabbit annoying a conceited opera singer, Giovanni Jones!

*The Barber of Seville* holds distinction as one of the best-known classical pieces. Kenneth Chalmers provides background in the liner notes accompanying London Records' *Rossini Overtures*.

"By the time he came to write his most famous comic opera, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (*The Barber of Seville*) in 1816, Rossini had been based for a year in Naples, as the resident composer for the San Carlo theatre, where he was required to provide serious operas. He was allowed to accept commissions from elsewhere, however, and both *Torvaldo e Dorliska* (December 1815) and *Il barbiere* (February 1816) were written for theatres in Rome."

Chalmers also lends insight into Rossini's music. "Much has been made of Rossini's readiness to re-use material, and



All graphics © Warner Bros.



Sketch from *Rhapsody Rabbit*



contemporary audiences were quick to spot any 'reminiscences' from operas they had already heard. The brilliant overture to the Barber is one of the most notorious examples of this, the piece having previously served for both *Aureliano in Palmira* and Rossini's first Neapolitan opera, *Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterra* (Elizabeth, queen of England).

*Seinfeld* buffs will recognize a portion of Barber from the episode simply titled The Barber (First Aired: NBC, November 11, 1993). In this episode, Jerry wants to switch from his regular barber to the nephew

and a comic opera ensues. Rossini's piece maintains the story's tongue-in-cheek quality.

Rossini's other famous piece, *The William Tell Overture*, appears as a new offering in *Overtures* with Daffy Duck and Porky Pig starring. We see the usually exasperated Daffy finding a new source of frustration in the audience's rather larger reception for Porky. Consequently, Daffy puts Porky in several ways of harm.

Knowledgeably, the animators use an archery motif for one of Daffy's schemes, staying true to the legend of William Tell, a folk hero of Switzerland and an opponent of oppression. Lore holds that Tell refused to carry out a command of Bailiff Gessler in the early 1300s and, in turn, received a mandate to shoot an apple placed on his son's head.

This selection ends with a well-known Masked Man making a cameo and Porky predictably asking, "Who was that masked man?" Indeed, since the Lone Ranger's debut on radio in 1933, *The William Tell Overture* has been the character's hallmark theme, whether the medium be radio, television or film. Its use in *Overtures* gives rise to a coda on arguably the most recognized piece of classical music in the popular culture.

Rossini's *William Tell* opera, written in 1829, derives from an 1804 play by J.C. Friedrich von Schiller. Rossini wrote the piece during his third significant career

period in Paris, the first two taking place in Venice and Naples. In the aforementioned liner notes, Kenneth Chalmers explains Rossini's growth as a composer with this orchestration. He also outlines the four parts which denote the day's beginning, a storm, the countryside and a military victory.

"The last of Rossini's operas in French was *Guillaume Tell* (1829), and the famous overture to this shows how far Rossini had travelled since his first, Venetian operas. Atmosphere is now an important element, and the piece evokes the natural world of the opera's Swiss setting, from the serene opening, through the representation of a storm and the pastoral *ranz des vaches* [translation: countryside], to the energetic *galop* which brings the overture to its exciting close." We recognize the fourth part as the Lone Ranger theme.

Franz von Suppé's *Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna* and Franz Liszt's *The Hungarian Rhapsody* also avail themselves in *Overtures*. Interestingly, Liszt's composition appears in *Rhapsody Rabbit* (Merrie Melodies, 1946) which features Bugs trying to play *Hungarian Rhapsody* on a piano solo while a mouse interferes with his plan.

Some added bonuses appear in *Overtures*, one being Sylvester singing *The Charleston* and performing the appropriate dance steps. In addition, *Overtures* begins with an underrated, underutilized trio in the Warner Brothers cartoon stable. The Three Bears only appeared in five shorts, but they kick off *Overtures* with Mama Bear encouraging the family on the concert's entertainment value.

Throughout the show, an indestructible, experimental fly wreaks havoc on the players' performance having escaped from a laboratory.

At twenty-four minutes in length, *Bugs Bunny's Overtures to Disaster* can give children a brief, beginning exposure to classical music, something seemingly sorely needed.

Parents often lament the lack of culture in their children's lives. They see any glimmer of hope for an appreciation of the fine arts shadowed by other less demanding interests on the intellect and imagination, such as ABC's TGIF lineup and the latest version of *Doom*. *Bug's Bunny's Overtures to Disaster* is a good antidote to the malady of the bread and circuses that plagues all of us, not just our children. It makes classical music entertaining, interesting and, dare I say it, fun!



The Three Bears are your ticket to music appreciation © Warner Bros.



# 1983 CARTOON TRIVIA

by Gord Wilson

## What'd You See in '83?

The year Animato! was born was a shaky time for cartoon-lovers, with original animation at an all-time low. Saturday morning saw the introduction of any number of cartoons derived from popular TV shows: *The Dukes*, *Mork and Mindy*, *Mr. T.*, *Laverne and Shirley With The Fonz*, *The Gary Coleman Show*, *Gilligan's Planet*; linked to toy and merchandise licensing: *Blackstar*, *The Littles*, *The Biskitts*, *The Shirt Tales*; or inspired by video and role-playing games: *Pac-Man*, *Rubik the Amazing Cube*, *Donkey Kong*, *Frogger*, *Q\*bert*, *Space Ace*, *Dungeons and Dragons*. At the same time, four cartoon superstars made inroads into television, and 1983 marked high points in their careers:

**Alvin and the Chipmunks:** 1983 saw the first return to television of the recording rodents since 1961's long-running *The Alvin Show*, this time with a new, softened 'eighties look and joined by a female singing trio, The Chipettes. Their return to television was precipitated by the popularity of the 1980 platinum-selling album, *Chipmunk Punk*. A full-length theatrical feature, *The Chipmunk Adventure*, was released in 1987.

1. Name Alvin's two brothers.
2. What's Alvin's last name?
3. Name their human guardian.
4. What is his profession?
5. Name the three Chipettes.
6. Who takes care of the Chipettes?
7. What article of clothing does Alvin always wear?
8. What was the title of the Chipmunks' first recorded song?
9. What absent-minded inventor frequently stole the spotlight on *The Alvin Show*?
10. What musical instrument does Alvin play?

**Peanuts:** Charles Schulz's unsinkable comic strip kids gained their own weekly television show, *The Charlie Brown and Snoopy Show*, which ran on CBS through 1986, was later shown on the Disney Channel and is currently seen on Nickelodeon. Two Peanuts specials, *Is This Goodbye, Charlie Brown?* And *What Have We Learned, Charlie Brown?*, were Emmy nominees for 1982-1983.

11. Where did Charlie Brown get Snoopy?
12. With whom is Charlie Brown in love?
13. Whom does Marcy call "Sir"?
14. Who is Schroeder's favorite composer?
15. What's the occupation of Charlie Brown's father?
16. Whom does flying ace Snoopy fight against?
17. What's Sally's pet name for Linus?
18. What kind of pumpkin patch does the Great Pumpkin visit?
19. Snoopy's novels inevitably begin with what line?
20. What hymn do the Peanuts gang sing at the end of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*?



© United Feature Syndicate

**Garfield:** Jim Davis launched his comic adventures in 1978, but the fat cat's TV debut didn't come until 1983, with his first prime-time special, *Here Comes Garfield*, an Emmy nominee for 1982-1983 Outstanding Animated Program. Garfield specials would be Emmy winners the next three years in a row. Film Roman's still-airing *Garfield and Friends* TV show premiered on CBS in 1988.

21. Name Garfield's dimwitted dog buddy.
22. What's owner Jon's last name?
23. What was Jon's original profession?
24. What's Garfield's favorite food?
25. What's his least favorite food?
26. Name the World's Cutest Cat.
27. Where does Garfield often mail him to?
28. What farm-themed cartoon runs on *Garfield and Friends*?
29. Name Garfield's teddy bear.
30. Where was Garfield born?

**Mickey Mouse:** *The Simple Things* in 1953 was Mickey's last screen cartoon. Three decades later he re-entered the stage in *Mickey's Christmas Carol*, a new theatrical short which aired with three Disney favorites: *The Art of Skiing* (1941), *Donald's Snow Fight* (1942), and *Pluto's Christmas Tree* (1952). *Mickey's Christmas Carol*, a 1983 Oscar nominee, made its television premiere the next year on NBC.

31. In *Mickey's Christmas Carol*, who plays Marley's Ghost?
32. Who plays Mrs. Cratchit?
33. Who plays the Ghost of Christmas past?
34. Who authored the book *Mickey's Christmas Carol* is based on?
35. What was Mickey's first sound cartoon?
36. Who originally voiced Mickey Mouse?
37. Macy's department store sold 11,000 of what Mickey Mouse item in one day?
38. Name Mickey's rival for Minnie.
39. Name Mickey's cow and horse friends.
40. What artist has drawn the most Mickey Mouse comics?

Answers: Page 99



# A LITTLE BIRDIE TOLD ME

A Gossip Column  
by Thelma Scumm



My, my, where has the year gone?

1998 was actually a very good year for animated feature films if you don't count *Quest for Camelot* -- what is it with Warner Brothers? They promote the hell out of their crappy films like *Camelot* and *Space Jam* and ignore their gems like *Cats Don't Dance*. Anyway, I really enjoyed the big rivalry on both sides, and as much as I was hoping for exciting things from DreamWorks, the Disney films were still far superior.

*Prince of Egypt* had some absolutely amazing and beautiful animation and may be perhaps one of the best looking animated films I have seen in quite a while. However, as I have pointed out here many times (usually in some snide comment about *Fantasia's* failings), great animation cannot overcome a weak script.

My lack of religious belief has nothing to do with it; I don't believe in genies either but I really liked *Aladdin*. I know how to suspend my beliefs in a movie. The problem was that, well, Moses was a bit of a wimp.

The first 45 minutes or so were a great build-up. Here was Moses, spoiled son of Ramses, blind to the evil his father was doing. "Aha!" I thought. "The story of a true hero; a Gandhi or a Martin Luther King, who rallies his people against injustice! I can enjoy that." However, when Moses learns about the simple people who have been enslaved and joins them, what does he do? Nothing. Moses (or as I called him "The artist formerly known as the Prince") is content to live his little life without ever solving the problems he earlier faced.

This doesn't kill the story, though. The reluctant hero is a recurring motif in literature. So when Moses meets the burning

bush and is given his magic staff (Kill the wabbit, kill the wabbit. . .oops, sorry), I thought "Well, now the story will get somewhere."

Then it didn't. Moses came into town, said "Let my people go" and they weren't let go, so God did a bunch of stuff. Then Moses said "NOW will you let my people go?" and they said no- so God did some other stuff. Finally, the people were let go and they traveled to a sea (Duh! Hey Moses! Ever look at a map before heading off to the Promised Land?) and as the bad guys loomed closer and defeat seemed near, God did some stuff and everyone was saved.

Moses could have been anyone. The fact that his brother was the pharaoh was an interesting irony but really made no difference to the plot. What was so heroic about this guy?

I feel the same way about *Sleeping Beauty* actually. I never liked the three fairies helping the Prince destroy the dragon. Using magic to get out of a situation is a sloppy plot fix.

I know, I know -- *Prince of Egypt* is a well known story and if they changed it to make it more exciting it wouldn't be accepted and blah blah blah. I just think that if you are not willing to tell the best story you can, whether fact or fiction or myth, then perhaps you should not be telling that story and should be finding another one instead.

*Prince of Egypt* as a movie should be judged as all movies should be judged and not given a different standard because of its topic. (For example, I think that many people didn't like or even see the excellent film "Malcolm X" because of its topic. No one said you had to agree with Malcolm X's views to enjoy this well made film!)

*Prince* failed for me because in the long run, despite the excellent animation, I just didn't care enough about the story.

I will give Katzenberg and company credit for not doing the merchandizing. The image of kids playing with their Moses action figures is amusing to me ("You villainous pharaoh! My magic staff will take care of you and your evil henchmen! Take that!") but it is nice to see a studio with some integrity towards their story, or maybe it's just fear of religious extremists protesting.

*Mulan* was much more enjoyable to me and despite the fact that the loss of Alan Mencken made the music pretty darn forgettable, I wasn't bored for a minute. There were some nice twists and turns and some animation to rival *Prince* in the battle scenes. I don't think it will replace my Disney favorites but I was happy to know that it was a success. In the traditional animation category then, between Disney and DreamWorks, Disney takes the lead.

The other non-G rated DreamWorks animated film *Antz* was more enjoyable than *Prince* despite the more limited budget. It was nice hearing Woody Allen redoing the character he created in his "earlier, funnier movies."

On the down side, the character design wasn't very friendly or likeable, and the facial movements looked quite primitive, even compared to previous computer animated films. It looked rushed, and that is because it was rushed. DreamWorks just had to get their bug's tale out before Disney's.

It seems so petty and childish, much like Katzenberg's complaints mentioned in my last column, but it's apparently all true. You all know the story by now -- how Katzenberg decided to do a computer animated film about ants but his decision had absolutely nothing to do with the decision Disney made while he was still with them to make a computer animated film about ants. And if you believe that, you belong on a Los Angeles jury.

*Antz* was originally going to come out after *A Bugs' Life* and that is how it had been promoted for a year or so, until suddenly, just months before *A Bug's Life* was to be released, *Antz* pushed the date up to be released before the Disney film. My inside sources tell me that this was always the plan; that the animators had their "real" deadline and the deadline they told the reporters; and that it was always meant to be an underhanded attack on Disney.

Well, it didn't work. *A Bug's Life* came out a month or so after *Antz* and whopped



it in both the financial arena and the critical one, winning a place as one of the top ten films of the year on many critic's lists, and even being number one on many of them.

The animation was terrific and filled the screen with delights, and I am very happy to see that Disney will be releasing this film in widescreen format on video (now if we can just get them to do the same with the rest of the catalog; although maybe the new Disney DVDs just announced will be that way.)

*A Bug's Life* was indeed the best animated film of the year, outshining all the competitors. (even the supposedly cute but to me very annoying *Rugrats*.) A witty story, memorable characters, good timing, good direction -- everything a good film (animated or otherwise) should be.

Which brings me to a point I alluded to earlier: Sometimes people tend to treat animated films differently than other films, holding them to different standards. I was recently interviewed by *Variety* magazine for an article about the whole *Antz/Bugs Life* debate (but they didn't quote me and for that I will never forgive them) and one thing that the interviewer kept asking was what it would take for these animated films to be hits. "The same thing it takes for a live action film to be a hit," I replied. The bottom line is that what we are looking for when we plunk down our \$8 is to be entertained. Usually that means a good story, interesting characters, a well developed plot, good acting, good directing, good editing, and all the things that keep us in our seat for the duration of the picture. It really doesn't matter whether we are talking about an animated film or a live action film: a good movie is a good movie is a good movie!

I am a film buff. I like good movies, and I have quite a collection of them, as well as far too many books on the subject. I have silent films, action films, science fiction films, drama films, and animated films. I judge a good movie primarily on its rewatchability. I can still watch *City Lights*, *Star Wars* and *Beauty and the Beast* and enjoy them again and again.

I can appreciate a film's animation techniques in the same way I can appreciate Kubrick's use of the stationary camera, but even if I am in awe of the expert use of the tools of filmmaking, it doesn't mean that I like the finished film.

In a similar vein, this is the same kind of complaint that my pals in the science fiction community voice: Filmmakers, critics, and the motion picture academy tend to look down their noses at films that are not pretentious or "serious" dramas. They will

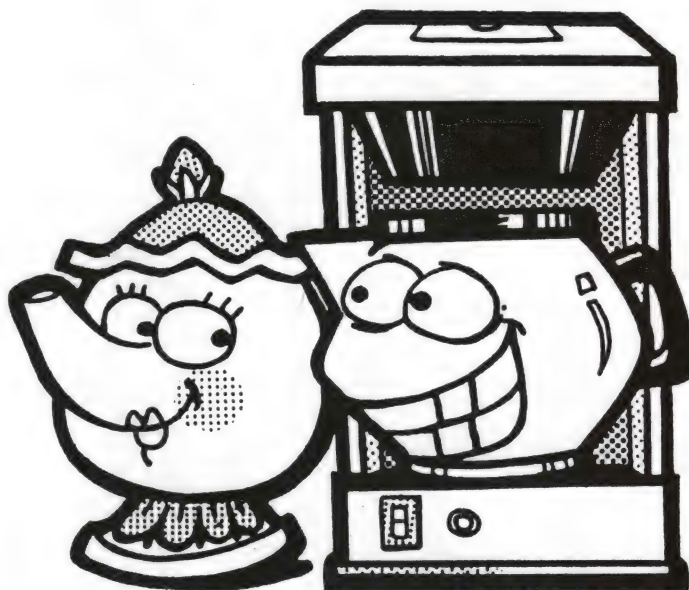
look to the genre the film is in (or in the case with animated films, the method by which the film was made) and will not treat the film with the same respect as a film which is much inferior but which features actors with British accents brooding over boring subjects.

The sooner we animation buffs can convince the rest of the film community that we want animated films to be judged by the same criteria, and get the same recognition, as live action films, the sooner we can break these biases. Some critics, especially Leonard Maltin (when he is not playing cameos in *South Park*, Roger Ebert, and the late and missed Gene Siskel, understand this and have started the movement in the right direction. Gene Siskel was one of the few reviewers to place a "kid's movie" on his top ten list of 1998, putting *Babe: Pig in the City* at the top of that list. That sort of bravery should be rewarded.

That's all of my tirade for this issue. I sincerely apologize to those of you who have visited my web page or emailed me and have not received a response; I have been very busy this past year. My web page is at <http://members.aol.com/thelmascum> and my email address is [thelmascum@aol.com](mailto:thelmascum@aol.com).

So until next time, remember -- If you can't say something nice about someone, come sit by me.

*Thelma Scumm*



Mrs. Potts Meets Mr. Coffee

# BROTHERS

*Continued from page 53*

cartoons got to Jack Warner who told Selzer to make more Taz cartoons. Thus, four more cartoons were made and the character went on to greatness.

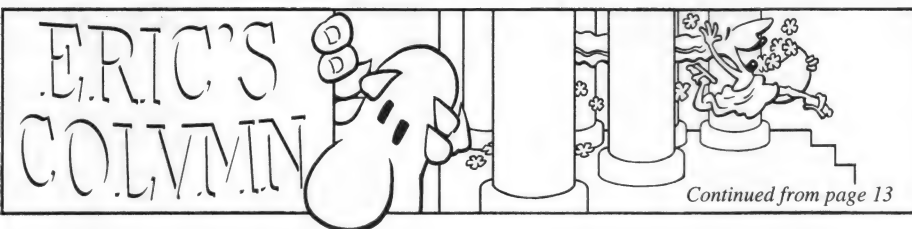
When the studio was closed in 1963, Robert continued directing theatrical and TV animated cartoons and commercials, for various studios, until his untimely passing in 1977. He was the consummate artist who studied to become one of the finest animators and directors in animation history. In 1984, Robert McKimson, was honored with an "Annie" award for his contribution and achievements in animation. A humble man who never "blew his own horn" and passed away all too soon. I could only wish that somehow, somewhere, he could see the joy and happiness he has brought to millions upon millions of people, not only for this and past generations, but for generations to come.

As you can see, the McKimson brother's accomplishments, and wide range of talents, from 1928 until today, has created a legacy no other three brothers have equaled in their field. I can only hope that their places in the history of animation and comic book art will continue to be recognized and appreciated.



DCCHIUTO



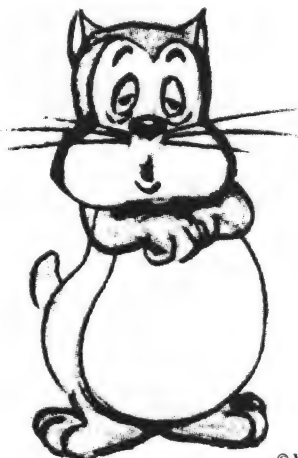


tually sharing shelter with a skunk (who puts on a gas mask, har de har). MacArthur would recover from this debacle, and by the time of *Draftee Daffy* (WB, Clampett, 1945), MacArthur would defeat the Japanese in his return to the Philippines, fulfilling the promise he made in 1942 that "I shall return" (which would be used afterward to caricature him in *Bugs Bonnets* (WB, Jones, 1956), along with the mechanical caricature of him in Avery's 1953 MGM cartoon *Little Johnny Jet*, in which his "old soldiers never die" line from his famous speech to Congress in 1951 is referenced). Gen. Jimmy Doolittle's raid on Tokyo is referenced in *The Blitz Wolf*, with shells landing on Tokyo and a sign appearing *Doolittle Dood It!* (a gag not shown today on TV, though the rest of the cartoon is shown). The caricature of Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto (another poor one that looks nothing like him) in *Tokio Jokio* is doubly interesting. The gag centers around a comment allegedly made by Yamamoto to the effect that the only way to achieve peace after a war with the US was to dictate the terms in the White House; Yamamoto had been an attache in Washington, and unlike many other Japanese leaders was under no illusions as to American economic and military might and willpower. American propagandists took this out of context, to mean that Yamamoto was boasting he would so dictate terms, and the gag reflects this common story. The gag ends up by showing the reserved room for Yamamoto, which has an electric chair. The kicker to the gag is that by the time the cartoon was released in May, 1943, Yamamoto was already dead, having been shot down in April, 1943 by US Army fighters, after intelligence analysts, reading broken Japanese codes, pinpointed his location, in one of the great intelligence coups of the war. One Russian general, Semyon Timoshenko, is used as the basis for an Irish gag in *Russian Rhapsody*, when Hitler threatens to "bomben that Irish general Tim O'Shenko!"

### The back pages...

Even now-forgotten or long-past news events or personalities have faint echoes in cartoons, such as the Dionne quintuplets (Daffy Duck, working at the stork baby delivery service in 1946's *Baby Bottleneck* (WB, Clampett) is aghast at some request, not stated, from this father), Douglas (Wrong-Way) Corrigan's mistaken crossing of the Atlantic Ocean by plane (he thought, supposedly, that he was flying to Los Angeles) in July, 1938, caricatured in a very swift response in Avery's September, 1938 WB cartoon *A Feud There Was*, Henry Kaiser's masterful shipbuilding during World War II, which built ships seemingly instantly, as in *The Weakly Reporter* (WB, Jones, 1944), baseball stars Joe DiMaggio in one of Daffy's cons in *Boobs in the Woods* (WB, McKimson, 1950), Dizzy Dean, masterful '30s-era Cardinal pitcher and even more masterful booster as a rooster in *Boulevardier from the Bronx* (WB, Freleng, 1936). The "pirate sub" that is the basis for the plot in *Porky the Gob* (Hardaway/Dalton, 1938) had a real-life counterpart in Italian subs that sank merchant shipping off the coast of Spain during the Spanish Civil War, which was still being fought at the time the cartoon was released.

So, even "real life" events and personalities intruded upon the never-never world of Hollywood, radio and its celebrities, as expressed in cartoons, and an examination of many of these is evocative of then-current views of the world situation.



© Warner Bros.

"Catstello" image at right, from  
A Tale of Two Kitties (1942),  
is a caricature of comedian Lou Costello

## '83 TRIVIA QUIZ ANSWERS:

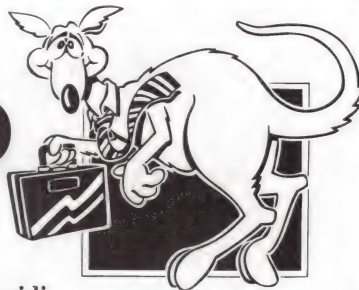


1. Theodore and Simon
2. Seville
3. Dave Seville
4. Songwriter
5. Brittany, Jeanette and Elenore
6. Mrs. Miller
7. A red shirt with a yellow initial "A"
8. "The Chipmunk Song"  
(aka "Christmas Don't Be Late")
9. Clyde Crashcup
10. Harmonica
11. The Daisy Hill Puppy Farm
12. The little red-haired girl
13. Peppermint Patty
14. Beethoven
15. Barber
16. The Red Baron
17. My Sweet Baboo
18. The most sincere
19. "It was a dark and stormy night"  
(Bonus points if you know it's  
from Edward Bulwer-Lytton)
20. Hark the Herald Angels Sing
21. Odie
22. Arbuckle
23. Cartoonist
24. Lasagna
25. Raisins
26. Nermal
27. Abu Dhabi
28. U.S. Acres
29. Pookie
30. In the kitchen of Mama Leoni's  
Italian Restaurant
31. Goofy
32. Minnie Mouse
33. Jiminy Cricket
34. Charles Dickens
35. Steamboat Willie
36. Walt Disney
37. The Ingersoll Mickey Mouse Watch
38. Mortimer Mouse
39. Clarabelle Cow and Horace  
Horsecollar
40. Floyd Gottfredson



# The ANIMATED TOURIST

by Amid Amidi



I just wanted to take a brief moment to welcome everybody to this new column The Animated Tourist. It takes a look at a wide variety of interesting and diverse animation events giving you an insider's look of what goes on at these various functions. There's a lot of great coverage planned for all sorts of events and I look forward to sharing my experiences with ANiMATO! readers. We kick off this issue with a look at the grand opening of the very modern Nickelodeon Animation Studios as well as experiences from the extravagant *Mulan* premiere at the Hollywood Bowl, a photographic essay from the Animation Celebration and a night at the UCLA film preservation event

## FREE LUNCHES AND MINIATURE GOLF: NICKELODEON'S NEW STRATEGY

A sure sign of knowing something good has arrived is when you see mega-conglomerate head Sumner Redstone trying to get the confetti off his head at the grand opening of one of his studios. That was exactly the scene at the March 4 grand opening of the new Nickelodeon Animation Studios and what a scene it was. It's hard to believe that it was eight years ago that Nickelodeon announced their newest endeavor, *Nicktoons*. A year later, their first three innovative series debuted - *Doug*, *Rugrats* and the incomparable *Ren and Stimpy* - signaling Nickelodeon's arrival into the animated world.

Now, Nickelodeon is changing the world of animation again by opening the first new TV animation studio in Los Angeles in 35 years. Nickelodeon Animation Studios is certainly something to behold and is as different from other studios as Nickelodeon's animated shows are unique from their competitors. Located in Burbank, California, the studio boast amenities and features that animators 20 years ago working at drudge houses like Filamation and

Ruby-Spears could only dream about. The 72,000 square-foot facility is equipped to house up to 300 artists and produce 100 half-hours of animated programming a year with up to 5 shows in production simultaneously. Currently four shows are in production - *Hey Arnold!*, *Oh Yeah! Cartoons!*, *CatDog* and *Angry Beavers*.

The new studio sounds more like an amusement park when you first hear about it. You've got to admit that most studios don't have their own nine hole miniature golf course, a cappuccino bar, a Nicktoons Studio store, an art gallery displaying employee work, a combination



basketball court/screening room and a Gak fountain to top it all off. However, this studio is not all fun and games and is well-equipped when it comes to the art of producing cartoons. Besides the hundreds of artist-designed desks, the studio has its own post-production area, sound editing and mixing rooms, a recording facility, a Foley stage, 175 high-powered workstations, 25 screening rooms, an experimentation lab and an archival animation library. Combine all this with a custom-designed living room, writer's lounge and storyboard conference room for each production and you've got yourself a pretty nicely equipped studio.

So what are the artists saying about all this? Craig Bartlett, creator of *Hey Arnold!* said that he'd always wanted to work in a "real studio." He wanted it to be something fun and not like your "traditional studio" so he felt right at home here. Long-time industry vet, Mitch Schauer, creator of *Angry Beavers*, says one of the great things about the new studio is the working environment which embodies the ideology of who the cartoons are made for - the kids. He also goes on to say that one of his favorite things about the studio is the free catered lunch for employees every Friday. It seemed that most every artist I spoke to at the grand opening agreed that the free lunch was one of their very favorite things about working at Nickelodeon. I don't know exactly what they're putting in those lunches but that'll be a topic for a future article.

Of course, nothing happens in the 90s without somebody opposing it and Nickelodeon has received its fair share of criticism. Its biggest opponent is Local 839 of the Motion Picture Cartoonists Union, which is the union for animation artists in

Los Angeles. A two-page ad the Union bought in a recent issue of *Variety* read "Glamour. Glitz. Miniature Benefits." In a spoof of the ads Nickelodeon had taken announcing the grand opening of the studio where they touted miniature golf as one of the features of the studio. Then again, the Union targets anybody not in their band so Nickelodeon is not likely losing any sleep over it. This having been said, many people within the industry believe that maybe Nickelodeon shouldn't have spent so much on all

these extra amenities and instead poured the money back into their productions raising their level of quality. After all, weren't some of the greatest cartoons made in a terrace filled with termites?

Regardless of what people say though, Nickelodeon has built something truly unique and told the world that they're out to produce innovative cartoons. Only a mile away from the studio is a typical tall office building with the words DiC at the very top. Those words don't mean much to regular folks but to animation fans it's not a pretty picture. And I'm sure as heck that most of you, like myself, would be more than willing to watch a Nickelodeon show any day over something from DiC.



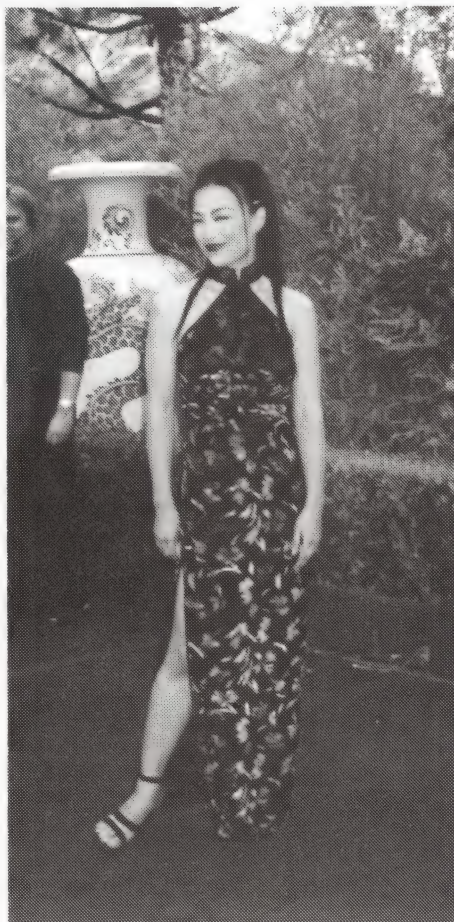


An animated tourist's-eye-view of the Hollywood Bowl

Photos by Amid Amidi

Well folks, I'm going to be honest and start this off by saying that I didn't like *Mulan* one bit, but I digress because it isn't a review of the film - it's a look at the extravagant gala premiere that Walt Disney Pictures threw for the *Mulan* Premiere. The *Mulan* Premiere at the Hollywood Bowl took place on June 5 and it was a darn interesting one too. The event kicked off with a reception outside the Bowl where animation artists and Hollywood celebrities arrived for a Chinese-themed reception where they chowed down on dim sum, fried rice, fortune cookies and green tea. Among the celebrities that showed up were America's favorite comedian, Sinbad; fresh-out-of-jail Robert Downey, Jr., Minnie Driver, Robert Townsend, and a number of voice actors in the film including the legendary June Foray, George Takei, Ming-Na Wen, Pat Morita, and the great Asian actor Donny Osmond. That was a joke son, get it? I found it rather interesting that many primary members of the voice cast such as Eddie Murphy and Harvey Fierstein didn't even bother showing up.

Now the main action took place at the legendary outdoor Hollywood Bowl itself and I must say that this is where Disney really outdid themselves. They only filled 10,000 of the 18,000 capacity Hollywood Bowl to create an optimum film and live show experience. This was a wise move because although my seat was near the back, the sound quality was better than in a theater, and it should be considering that they had a 140,000 Watt sound system with over 100 speakers covering every nook and cranny of the Bowl. The film screen was clear from a distance due to the



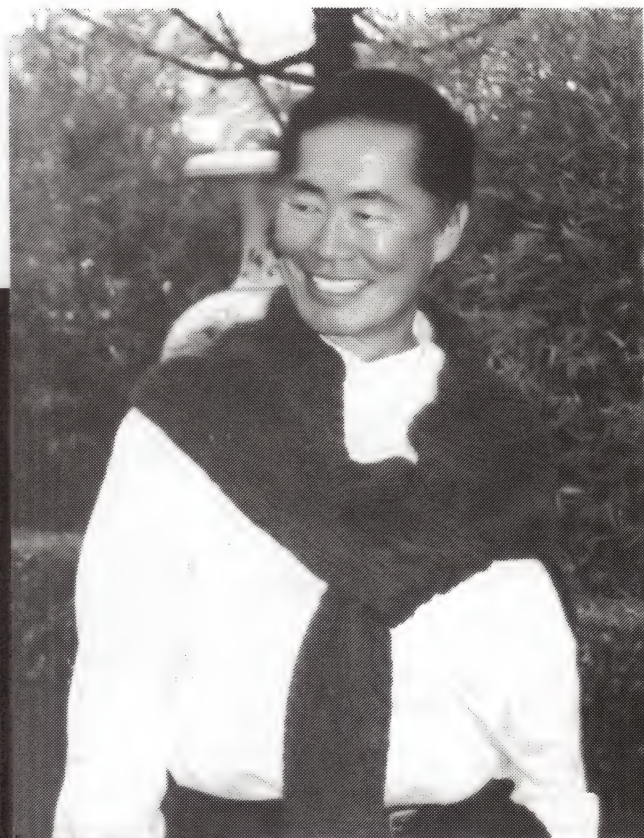
Ming-Na Wen  
Voice of Fa Mulan

fact that this was the biggest screen ever used in the Hollywood Bowl. The screen, which was designed specifically for the event, was over 40 feet high and 70 feet wide.

Anyway, the evening started with a sleepy *Mulan Suite* written and conducted by Jerry Goldsmith and performed by the Hollywood Bowl orchestra. Everybody was awakened by the upbeat Disney's Classic Celebration Concert which heralded the promise that they'd play over 25 classic Disney songs along with hundreds of dancers and live performances by Jodi Benson and Paige O'Hara among others. Well of these classic songs, sadly all were from the new Disney regime (post - *The Little Mermaid*). Then came the main attraction, the event that everybody had come to see - the actual screening of *Mulan* and let me say; it's quite a different experience seeing a film with 10,000 people outdoors than the normal experience of sitting in a cramped theater. After the film an immense and very long fireworks finale stole the show giving the delighted audience some nice eye-candy while exiting the Bowl.

Hollywood premieres are always fun and Disney knows how to put one on better than anybody else in the business. I only wish their films exhibited the same originality and creativity that goes into their well-orchestrated premieres.





George Takei  
Voice of First Ancestor

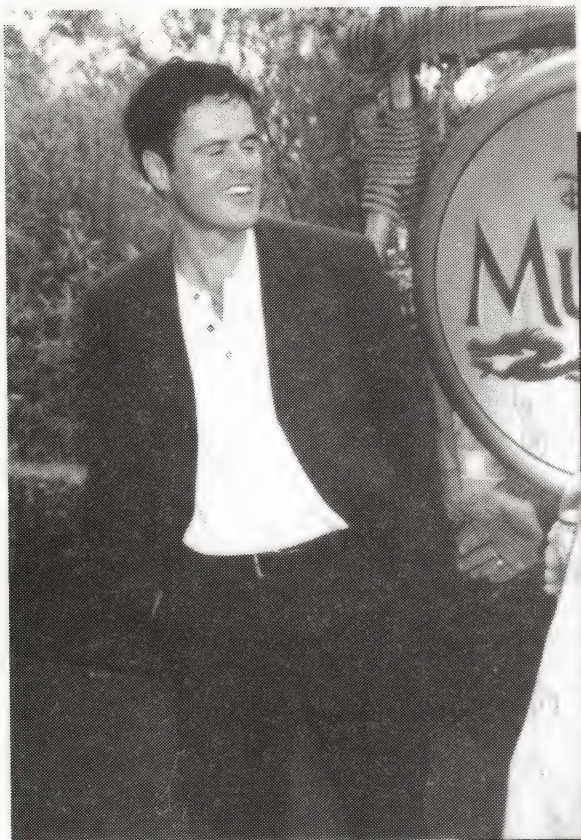


June Foray  
Voice of Grandmother Fa

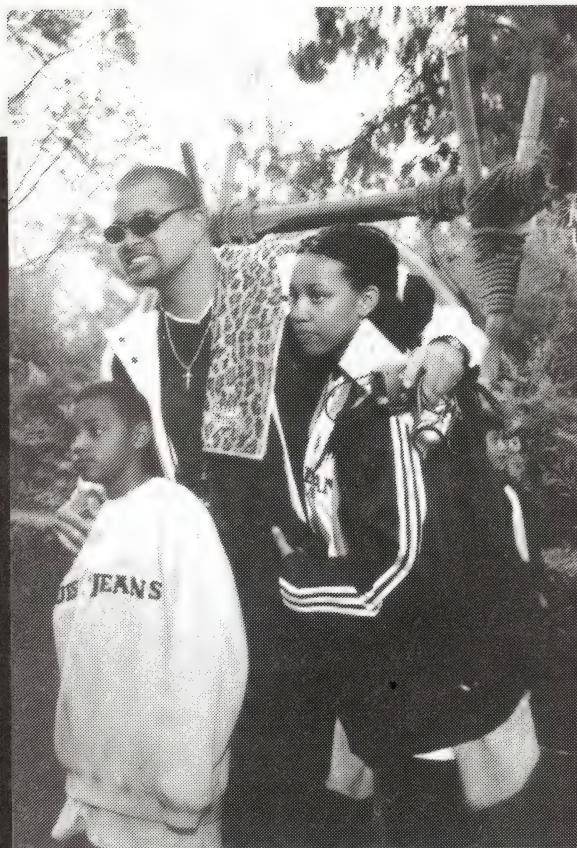


The Robert Townsend family and friends

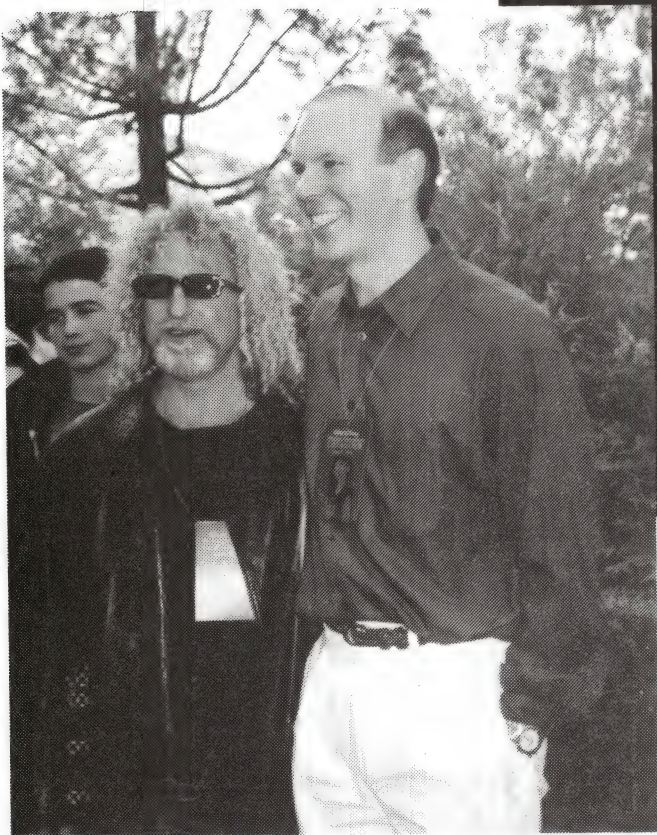




**Donny Osmond**  
Singing voice of Shang  
and Andrew Osmond's namesake



**Sinbad and children** enjoying the event

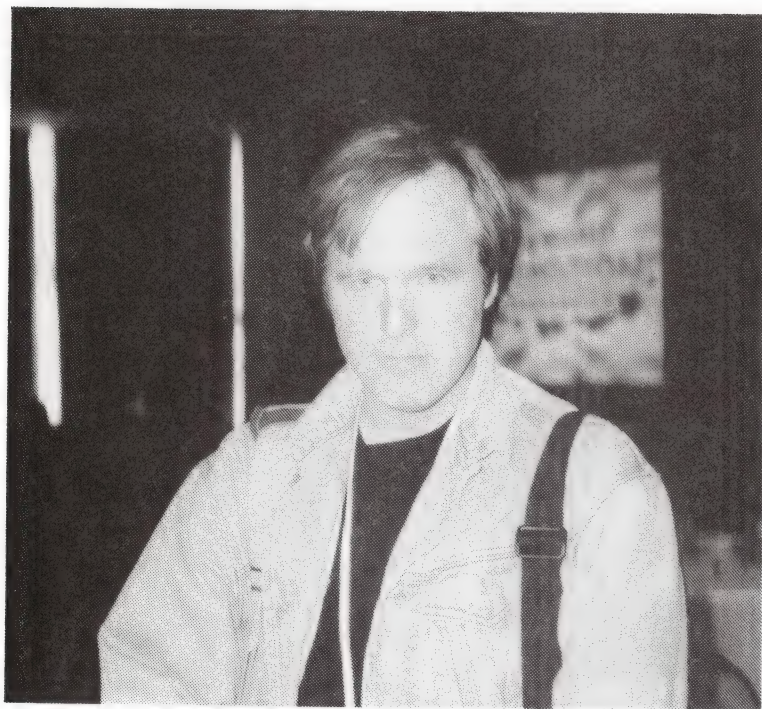


**Matthew Wilder and David Zippel**  
Music (Wilder) and lyrics (Zippel) for *Mulan*



**Jerry Goldsmith**  
Original score composer and conductor





Face to face with Brad Bird



Ray Harryhausen

## Snapshots from The Animation Celebration in Los Angeles



Henry Selick



Top row: (left to right) Corky Quakenbush, Brown Johnson, Mike Lazzo  
Front Row: (left to right) Fred Seibert, Bill Kopp, Sue Rose

All photos by Amid Amidi



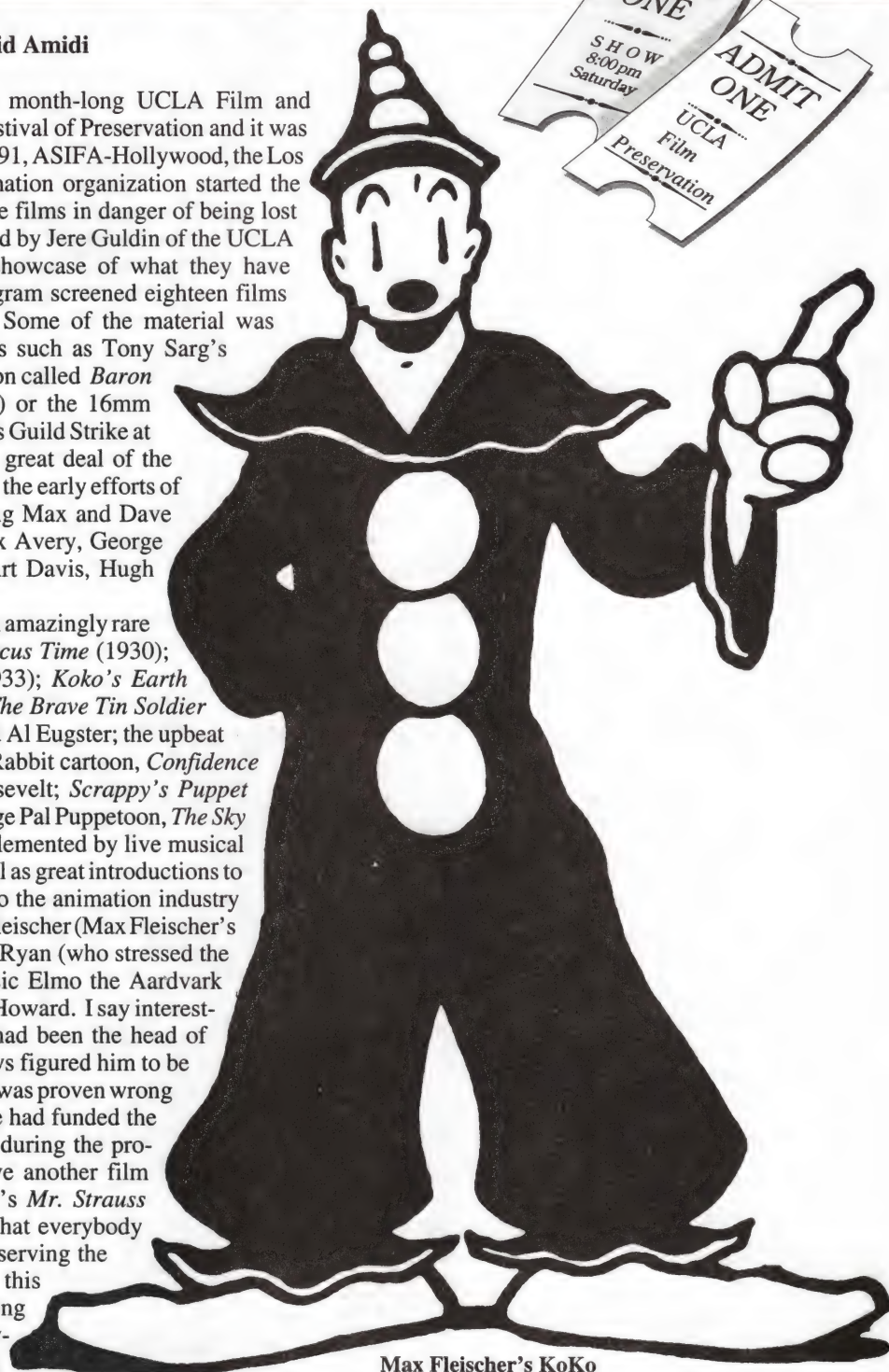
# ANIMATION PRESERVATION

UCLA Film and Television Archive's Ninth Festival of Preservation

Report by Amid Amidi

This program was part of the month-long UCLA Film and Television Archive's Ninth Festival of Preservation and it was nothing short of amazing. In 1991, ASIFA-Hollywood, the Los Angeles chapter of the worldwide animation organization started the Animation Preservation Project to rescue films in danger of being lost forever. The screening, which was hosted by Jere Guldin of the UCLA Film and Television Archive, was a showcase of what they have preserved so far and the three hour program screened eighteen films spanning the teens through the '40s. Some of the material was preserved for purely historical purposes such as Tony Sarg's excruciatingly boring silhouette animation called *Baron Bragg and the Devilish Dragon* (1922) or the 16mm home movies from the Screen Cartoonists Guild Strike at Terrytoons Studio (1947). However, a great deal of the films were quite entertaining and showed the early efforts of many future animation legends including Max and Dave Fleischer, Ub Iwerks, Walter Lantz, Tex Avery, George Pal, Dick Heumer, Shamus Culhane, Art Davis, Hugh Harman and Rudy Ising among others.

Some of the films screened included an amazingly rare and hilarious Toby the Pup cartoon, *Circus Time* (1930); the surreal *Betty Boop's Penthouse* (1933); *Koko's Earth Control* (1928); Ub Iwerks' handsome *The Brave Tin Soldier* (1934) animated by Shamus Culhane and Al Eugster; the upbeat Depression-bashing Oswald the Lucky Rabbit cartoon, *Confidence* (1933) with an animated Franklin Roosevelt; *Scrappy's Puppet Theatre* (c. 1937); and the beautiful George Pal Puppetoon, *The Sky Princess* (1942). The evening was supplemented by live musical accompaniment for the silent films as well as great introductions to each film by various people connected to the animation industry including Jerry Beck, Tom Sito, Richard Fleischer (Max Fleischer's son), Mark Kausler, Joe Adamson, Will Ryan (who stressed the importance of saving many of the classic Elmo the Aardvark cartoons) and interestingly enough Max Howard. I say interesting because Max Howard till recently had been the head of Warner Feature Animation and I'd always figured him to be a cookie-cutter animation executive but I was proven wrong at the screening. Out of his goodwill, he had funded the preservation of a complete cartoon and during the program presented a new check to preserve another film which has turned out to be George Pal's *Mr. Strauss Takes a Walk*. This just goes to show that everybody should take notice when it comes to preserving the history and legacy of animation and this evening was a great step towards making people aware of the importance of preserving animated films.



Max Fleischer's KoKo



# Phil Hartman Remembered

by Judith Reboy

When I returned to ANiMATO! last year after a brief leave of absence, Pat asked me to write up a "dream list" of people I wanted to interview. High on that list was actor/voice artist Phil Hartman, who, as most readers know, was shot to death last May, apparently by his wife Brynn in a murder-suicide. I will always regret not having the opportunity to talk to him.

Although he was hardly a household name at the time of his death, Hartman was a truly gifted comic actor. I remember vividly the first time I knowingly watched him. Early in his eight season stint on *Saturday Night Live*, he starred in a blackout skit in which he played the robotic host of a home improvement show who got increasingly annoyed by the show's deceptive titles. (Robot Repair, Let's Fix Robot, This Old Robot.) Eventually, he took a screwdriver to himself to eliminate his prime directive and attacked the producer (off camera), prompting one more title change to Fugitive Robot.

This combination of the familiar and the bizarre exemplified the best of *NewsRadio* work. As Saturday Night Live's First Impersonator during the early days of the Clinton Administration, he showed our Chief Executive jogging through a McDonald's for a quick bite, Secret Service agents in tow. On his final series, *NewsRadio*, he played narcissistic news anchor Bill McNeal, who could escalate a simple interview with Jerry Seinfeld into a full scale battle.

Fans of *The Simpsons* "may remember him as" has been actor Troy McClure and the inept, ambulance chasing lawyer Lionel Hutz. He also made several guest appearances on *Eek! The Cat*, most notably as the cute, furry, homicidal pet bunny in the first season episode *Cape Fur*. He menaced Darkwing Duck as Paddywhack, a malevolent spirit who possesses Quackerjack's puppet, Mr. Banana Brain in a particularly scary episode which gave DC Comics' villain Eclipso a few knocks.

In the early '80s Hartman helped his friend Paul Reubens develop his infamous Pee Wee Herman character and co-scripted *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*. This led to a regular stint as Kap'n Karl on *Pee Wee's Playhouse*. In addition he was also a regu-

lar voice on *Tom and Jerry Kids*, Rick Moranis in *Gravedale High*, and *The Smurfs*. He also provided the voices of Mr. Wilson on the recent *Dennis the Menace* cartoon and Ace London on Disney's *Tale Spin*.



Phil Hartman at work on *Kiki's Delivery Service*



Hartman was at his best when he could combine sweetness and vinegar in equal amounts. I will always think of Frankenstein's Monster as much of a Christmas icon as Santa Claus and Frosty the Snowman thanks to the SNL's trio of "Tonto, Tarzan and Frankenstein." (Jon Lovitz, Kevin Nealon and Hartman). Their tone deaf rendition of *The Little Drummer Boy*, in which Hartman's gentle monster pathetically struggles with a broken drum, still makes me smile, even though I've seen the clip countless times.

It's easy to see how Hartman was chosen to host *How the Grinch Stole Christmas: The Special Edition* for TNT a few years ago. His personality was a perfect fit for the legendary cartoon's mixture of cruelty, cuteness and holiday sentiment as he described the process by which the classic story made its way from book to television. His association with Turner's animated library also included some bumpers for the Cartoon Network that continue to air (*Cartoons That Never Made It!*)

His resume included a little something for everyone. Video game fans remember Phil for lending his tonsils to the title character of the Sony Playstation game *Blasto* and Techno Bill of Dilbert's Desktop Games. To children, he was the Hanging Lamp and the Air Conditioner in *The Brave Little Toaster*, and Jiji the cat in *Kiki's Delivery Service*.

His unexpected death caused shock waves which have influenced a large portion of his final work. I respect Matt Groening's decision to retire Hartman's running characters on *The Simpsons* once the final episodes that he recorded have aired. It would be regrettable but understandable if, as rumored, his role in *Small Soldiers* was abbreviated because the title characters, super intelligent action figures, menaced him with a gun. It is comforting to know that *NewsRadio* will go on, with friend and frequent co-star Jon Lovitz playing a new character who replaced Bill McNeal.

I must confess to being very bothered



Artwork depicting Phil's character Jiji the cat and Kiki from *Kiki's Delivery Service*

by the decision to edit him out of the last season finale of *Third Rock From the Sun* and insert footage of a new character in Hartman's role. The character, a maniac who kidnaps one of the show's resident alien observers, was pivotal to the story, but it seems to me that there could have been a way to satisfy audiences without deleting in perpetuity (Reruns are forever, folks!) one of the last appearances of a beloved performer.

Audiences didn't seem horribly confused when characters on *Roseanne* and *Maude* were recast. Even shows that usually write out characters when an actor leaves like *M\*A\*S\*H\** and *Mystery Science Theater 3000* have successfully recast roles when necessary. Hartman's passing was major news. People would have been able to handle the change, particularly if a dedication was aired during the season premiere. I can't help but believe that a talent who had been a part of the NBC family for over a decade certainly deserved a better send-off.

It is not unusual for someone who died so suddenly to be either demonized or canonized by the popular press. If there is an "up" side to this tragedy, it's that most of the kind words printed in the days following Hartman's death were nearly word for word the same things we've been reading about him for years. Major portions of his obituary seemed like a rerun. Lorne

Michaels of Saturday Night Live recounted Hartman's backstage nickname of "The Glue" that held the show together. Joe Dante, director of *Small Soldiers* told oft repeated stories about Hartman's patience and dedication to his son and daughter. So familiar were all these remembrances, it's likely that he knew how well liked and admired he was.

Many of his friends, most notably actor Steve Guttenberg, were on television within hours of the shooting begging those of us who write about such things to take the high road and avoid trashy speculation about the Hartmans' private lives. Although the tabloid press initially made some attempts at scandal, his friends needn't have worried. None of these mostly unsubstantiated stories seemed to catch the attention of the grieving public.

Instead, fans expressed concern for the Hartmans' two young children. Beyond that, there really wasn't much more to be said. There was no killer to be caught, and no trial. And, in the long run, months of scandal-mongering would not have changed anything.

There would still be no cases for Lionel Hutz to lose or for Unfrozen Caveman Lawyer to win. Troy McClure had made his last infomercial. A voice that was touched with genius was needlessly stilled.

Good-bye, Phil. You'll be missed.





# TOON REVIEWS

## A Bug's Life

Disney/PIXAR Feature Film

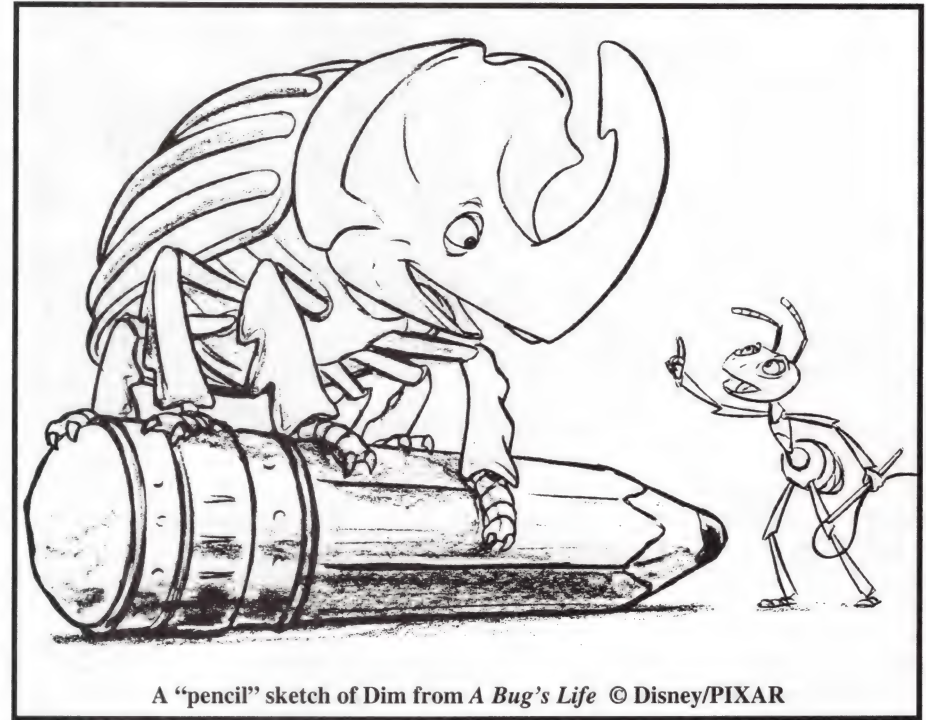
I had the pleasure of attending the cast party and screening of *A Bug's Life* at the Paramount Theatre in Oakland two weeks before the feature was released. Disney and Pixar treated everybody to a remarkable evening in as splendid a location as possible. By the time I left I felt I had attended an event almost as important as the Disney preview of *Snow White* for the studio's staff. The film is not only storytelling at its best, it is also a beautiful work of art. Pixar's new film could very well be the beginning of a new renaissance for the animated feature.

*A Bug's Life* is quite different from *Toy Story* as there are no human characters in the film. It harks back to the days of Silly Symphonies when a rich plot could be built around life in the forest. Pixar's wonderful yarn unfolds quickly and we are soon caught up in the desperate struggle for survival of a colony of ants. It's a timeless tale. It's the type of story that makes for great family entertainment.

This is a film that relies on suspension of disbelief. When the film began I had brief doubts about my liking the cute characters and hating the evil looking grasshoppers. I quickly put aside my intellectual thoughts as I became involved in this adventure. My involvement was so complete that my mind rarely strayed from the story until it was over.

A common complaint about animated films is the use of music in them. The music generally sticks out in some way and calls attention to itself. I knew this feature had songs by Randy Newman, in fact he was sitting a few seats away from me. When the film ended I was surprised to realize that I was so involved with the story that I was unaware of the individual pieces of music on the sound track. Sorry Mr. Newman, I can remember there was music, but I can't hum any bars of it.

The only sound elements that really called attention to themselves were sound effects in surround sound. Occasionally sounds from speakers on the sides of the



A "pencil" sketch of Dim from *A Bug's Life* © Disney/PIXAR

hall or in back called attention to themselves.

What sets this film apart from other fine films made recently (including *Toy Story*) is its having remarkably rendered computer backgrounds. The sets are classic Disney even though they are painted by machines. Gone are the slick computer renderings of a man-made world. Instead we are presented with beautifully painted depictions of nature. Pixar's artists are capable of showing a wide variety of moods from the warmth of a sunny day to the harshness of a rain storm. Pixar's artist understand how to depict the heat of the barren desert and the lushness of a green forest. They are masters that can depict any time of day and a wide variety of atmospheric conditions. Putting all these elements of nature together in one film is a major advance in computer animation.

I suspect that in time *A Bug's Life* will be called a classic work and it will be compared favorably with Disney's early features. Am I wrong? Go see this work on a

big screen and decide for yourself if director John Lasseter and co-director Andrew Stanton have created a masterpiece or not.

As for the opening, it was a splendid affair with most people in formal attire. The Paramount was the right hall for the occasion - it was just as fine looking as those who came to celebrate. The selection of food and beverages before and after the screening helped make it a fine evening, as did the live music in a giant tent next door to the theatre. People stayed up past their bedtimes and many spent the night in hotels, rather than risk driving home. (One friend who drove home after 1 AM said he got lost for awhile in downtown Oakland).

A big thrill for me was seeing Roy Disney Jr. He looks like his late uncle. There were several voice stars present along with top executives from Disney and Pixar. Just as important was seeing and talking with some of the people who worked long hours to make this wonderful work. Congratulations to all who contributed to it.

-Karl Cohen



**The Mighty Kong**

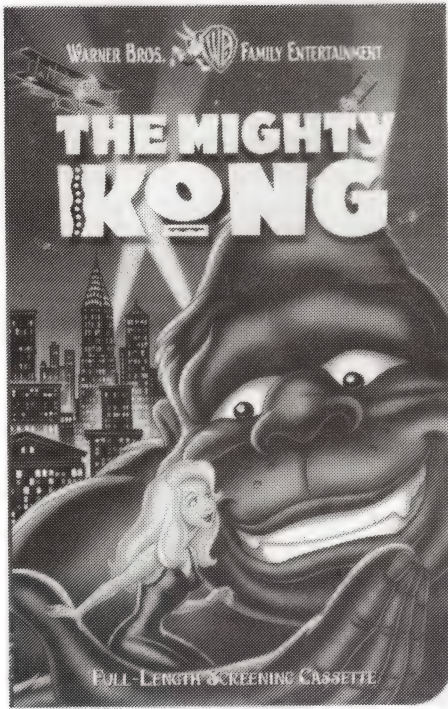
Warner Home Video. 78 long minutes.  
Directed by James A. Simon,  
written by William J. Keenan.  
©1997 by Lana Film Co., Inc. and  
©1998 Warner Home Video.

Here is the hazard of writing reviews. Once in a while, a review item comes in which is so utterly, depressingly, irredeemably awful that reviewing it is like shooting fish in a barrel. This is the situation one faces with Warner's direct-to-video mess, *The Mighty Kong*. A bad idea on the face of it—a low-budget musical cartoon feature based upon *King Kong*—is every bit as bad as the cover art makes it look. It's more like one of those hideous Disney ripoffs that bottom-fedding video companies rush into K-Mart than something that should carry the prestigious Warner banner.

In its finest moments *The Mighty Kong* is merely annoying. Those precious, annoying moments are few, however. The script has nothing fresh to offer and is built on clichés and unfunny slapstick. The musical numbers, especially egregious and stale, consistently stop dead in its tracks what meager story this movie offers. The songs by ex-Disney tunesmiths Richard and Robert Sherman are not only seriously out of touch with the times, they're surprisigly uninspired and unmemorable. The animation and character design are crude and inexpressive. There is just nothing in this sorry film to recommend.

The voice actors generally sound under-rehearsed, giving performances largely without focus. They seem to lack the guidance of a director. Dudley Moore performs his role as if his character is in a bad mock-opera, while Jody "Little Mermaid" Benson is trying hard to give a sincere reading in a thin role.

This story certainly doesn't lack potential. Think of the opportunity to design a stylish 1930s era New York City, an exotic jungle landscape, a foreboding Skull Island. The majesty inherent in *King Kong*'s first appearance, the ferocity of his encounters with the prehistoric beasts in the jungle, the tragedy of his death, tumbling off the Empire State Building—all have been squandered in this remake. The ending is particularly poor. With the broken Kong facedown on the city street, Dudley Moore intones imperiously, "Y'know, chaps, it wasn't the fall that killed Kong! It was beauty that killed the beast!" The version of this line was corny enough in the original, but at least it was sincere. Here it only trivializes what should have been a somber scene. Next, while the comic relief



**Too Long Kong?**

monkey sadly inspects the mighty gorilla, Kong's eyes open. The audience is apparently supposed to accept this as some kind of happy ending.

This whole miserable enterprise shows nothing but contempt for its audience.

-Dewey McGuire

**Kiki's Delivery Service**  
Buena Vista Home Video  
103 minutes

Anime? From Disney?  
Well, sort of, yes!

Manga artist and animation director/producer Hayao Miyazaki has been called the "Walt Disney of Japan". For around two decades he has treated family audiences one beautiful work after another, and every one of them is as enjoyable to adults as they are to children. In 1998 his latest, *Mononke Hime* ("Princess Mononke") broke box-office records in Japan, usurping *ET* from its long-standing #1 position.

"Anime for family audiences?" Well, yes, the two terms are not contradictory! Those whose only exposure to Japanese animation has been gore-splattered violence or explicit sex have been missing the bigger picture. The animation industry in Japan covers just as wide a spectrum as the American live-

action movie industry. For me, as someone who constantly has to remind "average" Americans that cartoons aren't just for kids, it's strange to have to remind those familiar with animation that anime isn't just for adults! (Of course, the Japanese definition of what is "suitable" for children is far less stringent than that of uptight Americans, but that's another argument.)

The confusion is understandable considering that violent and/or erotic anime seems to make a large percentage of what is being imported and translated, but hopefully the appearance of Miyazaki's line of work will help modify that perception. About a year-and-a-half ago, Disney and Miyazaki's company, Studio Ghibli, signed a licensing agreement. Disney is to translate a number of Ghibli films and distribute them to American theatres and video stores. Reportedly, Miyazaki insisted that the contract prevent Disney from editing a single frame from any of his films. Considering Disney's unfortunate tendency to censor its own material, this was a very wise precaution.

Miyazaki fans were thus optimistic about the deal, but guardedly so, since script changes can be made so easily in the dubbing process. Fortunately, the first Miyazaki film to be released under the deal, *Kiki's Delivery Service*, has survived the Disney treatment pretty much intact.

The film easily fits into the Miyazaki mold: it has a young, independent heroine,





explores basic yet mature themes, is set in a simpler age, and features—this is the big giveaway—aviation.

Miyazaki films are set in their own universes with their own sets of rules, but *Kiki* takes place in what might be compared to a 1940s European countryside. In this world there are rare individuals who practice witchcraft. No, they aren't worshippers of Satan, these witches are "good" and are accepted (and somewhat awed) by society.

A young novice witch, Kiki, reaches her 13th birthday and decides to leave home to hone her craft and find her specialty, following witch tradition. Her mother, a witch herself, and her father find the separation only slightly bittersweet, and are supportive of her choice to begin her life as a witch. It is here that Disney makes the first of its few alterations: originally Kiki was leaving for good, but in this version she's just going to train for a year and then return home. I suppose Disney feared shocking parents, Kiki seeming far too young and childlike to live on her own, but the change takes away a good portion of what little poignancy her departure had.

Accompanied by her cat Jiji (with whom she alone can converse), Kiki somewhat clumsily flies her mother's broomstick in search of a town to claim as her own. A Japanese pop song that previously scored her journey has been replaced with a catchy new one in English, and it works well.

Kiki finds her new town and settles in with a young couple who own and operate a bakery. She begins to make some extra cash by making deliveries via broomstick for the bakery and her own customers. She also befriends a boy who belongs to an amateur aviator's club.

In Kiki's deliveries and crises, Miyazaki introduces his typical themes of lost innocence, the powers of youthful exuberance, and the value of bygone ways of life: for example, Kiki's skills with wood-burning stoves saves the day when a customer's electric oven won't work.

When a crisis of health and self-confidence results in the loss of her powers, Kiki spends some time with another young woman on her own—an artist not too much older than Kiki who lives in a forest cabin. When Ursula tells Kiki about similar pitfalls in her quest for artistic inspiration, Kiki is reassured; later she is able to face her demons in an exciting climax involving her would-be boyfriend and a wayward airship.

Most of the translation/adaptation is more-or-less faithful to the intent of the original, if not strictly adherent to exact wording. One notable difference is the

voice of Kiki's cat. In the original Jiji had a high, feminine voice, even though he's male. I suppose they thought it sounded feline. This dubbed version features the late Phil Hartman as Jiji, using a deeper, but fitting voice for the sarcastic character. The amount of Jiji's dialogue is roughly tripled due to a lot of off-screen lines being added, but fortunately the additional quantity stops just shy of becoming annoying. The other voice work is well done and remains true to the spirit of the characters. Despite the use of "name casting", Kirsten Dunst and Janeane Garafalo (as Kiki and Ursula, respectively) provide fine performances. Rounding out the leads are Matthew Lawrence, Tress MacNeille, Edie McClurg and Debbie Reynolds.

Another, very minor change in content occurs when Kiki and Ursula hitch a ride in the country. The dialogue is altered to indicate that Ursula already knows the driver. Again, Disney seems afraid of encouraging dangerous behavior and instead says, in essence, "Don't take rides with strangers, kids!". This undermines the innocent setting—the film's world is a safe and simple one, and little girls need not fear psychopathic motorists. Fortunately, the new dialogue doesn't hint of any potential danger, it just happens Ursula knows the guy. So while the alteration is a bit silly it doesn't harm the film, and if it satisfies the Disney yen for PC tinkering, so be it.

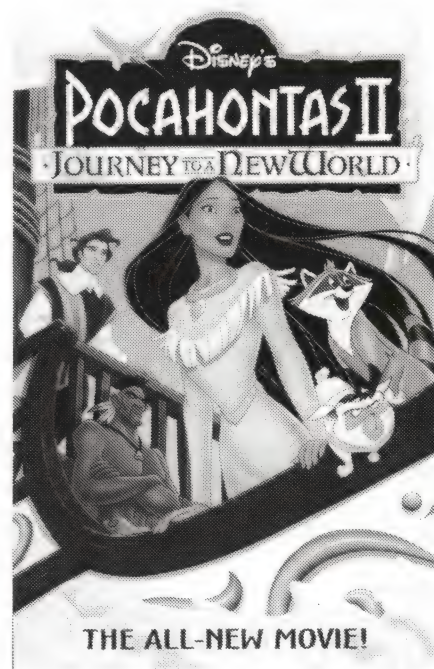
The tinkering, however, doesn't stop there. An aspect of Miyazaki's style is the use of quiet scenes without music or dialogue. Such moments are quite effective at setting desired moods and enable the viewer to take a bit of an auditory breather. It's a show of confidence in the material that Disney doesn't seem to have, for they have added new music, and sometimes dialogue, to every such scene in the film. Bits of the music score have also been inexplicably moved or replaced in several spots, and there's a lot of added dialogue that needlessly describes what can readily be seen. In addition, the (mildly) widescreen image is cropped instead of letterboxed. And why didn't this get a theatrical release?

Yet all told *Kiki's Delivery Service* is largely presented as it was meant to be seen. While not appeasing every fear of the Miyazaki purist, Disney has treated the material with a surprising amount of respect. It's about as much as one could hope for, and as long as Disney doesn't increase the degree of tampering for subsequent releases, America is in for several treats over the next couple of years.

—Jay Pennington

## **Pocahontas II: Journey to a New World** Walt Disney Home Video

In the last few years animation fans have witnessed the efforts of Disney's direct to video features, primarily in the form of sequels to their recent animated films. These are meant to capitalize on the strength of the popularity of the original film and keep the characters alive in the eyes of their target audience. These films have met with mixed reviews from older fans, many of them dismissing such fare as "second rate" fluff; some deeming them unwatchable by the strict codes of the animation purist.



The latest entry in the world of Disney spin-offs is *Pocahontas II: Journey to A New World*. This comes as a surprising choice, due to the original film's controversial warping of historical fact, its overall lukewarm reception by the public and dismal merchandise sales. To consider such variables, it's a wonder this project ever got further than the proposal stage.

The storyline picks up some time after Pocahontas's dramatic conclusion: John Smith is assumed dead, and Pocahontas is having difficulty accepting the changes in her life. Even more pressing is the hostility of the Jamestown settlers, many of whom have little trust in the natives, and suspicions arise on both sides as they prepare for the possibility of war. The events lead to the arrival of the proper English diplomat John Rolfe, summoned by King James to negotiate with the tribe's Chief. Pocahontas is sent to England in his stead, ensuing



in the usual fish-out-of-water escapades one would expect. Once there, she is indirectly duped by the now free Governor Ratcliffe (who remains in King James' good graces) to attend the elegant Hunt Ball. Therefore, the proud Indian princess must shed her buckskin gear for the dainties of high society and learn proper etiquette in order to gain an audience with the King. Ratcliffe thwarts her best efforts, and she winds up a prisoner, awaiting execution. Enter John Smith, who teams up with Rolfe to rescue her, therein forming a dreaded love triangle.

Historically, the script goes the way of the previous film: painting a more PC portrait, albeit a more appealing one for the sake of family viewing. There are a few bold moves I'm surprised remained in the final cut, the two most evident: a scene where Pocahontas is struck (off-camera) by a settler, along with several examples of extreme alcohol consumption. However, the script itself is not top heavy with drama, it includes plenty of comic relief through the pantomime antics of Pocahontas's animal companions; as well as the Mister Magoo-esque housemaid Mrs. Jenkins.

The biggest flaw in the writing was John Smith's dialogue (voiced here by Mel Gibson's brother, Donal); most of his lines formed as typical action-hero catch phrases. This harms his presence in the film, as the viewer groans at the endless barrage of uninspired comebacks. Looking past this annoying pittance, the returning characters remain true to their big-screen counterparts.

On the technical side, the animation is far beyond that of the primitive Return of Jafar, and contains some impressive character animation, especially in the drawing of Pocahontas and John Rolfe. The new characters are designed well, and blend in nicely with the designs of the originals. But the true technical jewels here lie in the layout design and some detailed background scenes. The CGI used is not overdone, nor is it truly remarkable.

What is present and most distracting is the use of colored outlines for the primary characters (as used in more recent Disney animated films), and straight black outlines for the incidental characters (ala Saturday-morning cartoons). When interaction takes place between the two types, the difference is more than obvious. I'll admit, there are some elaborate crowd sequences within this film, but considering the ease computer technology offers, there isn't much room for excuses here.

Beyond a few forgettable song sequences and a rather abrupt conclusion, the film

will no doubt be enjoyed by the audience it was intended for. As for those of us a little longer in the tooth: it may appeal to fans of the original film; for everyone else... well, there's always *The Lion King 2* awaiting us.

-Jay Pennington

### **The Prince of Egypt**

Released December 18, 1998

Running Time: 92 minutes

Directed by Brenda Chapman, Steve Hickner and Simon Wells

If *The Prince of Egypt* is the best DreamWorks can do, Disney has nothing to worry about. Former Disney Chief Jeffrey Katzenberg, who was at least partially responsible for hits like *The Little Mermaid* and *The Lion King*, supervised every aspect of *Prince* for the last four years, and DreamWorks' publicity department responded by hyping the heck out of this animated epic. The result, I'm afraid, is mostly a grandiose bore. Yes, *Prince* features some of the most spectacular scenes

(1956). As the film opens, the Pharaoh Seti (voice of Patrick Stewart) has ordered the murder of all Hebrew infants in Egypt. We see a young woman (Israeli singer Ofra Haza) place her son, the infant Moses, in a basket and send him floating down the Nile. He is discovered by the Queen (Helen Mirren), who decides to raise him as her own son.

Twenty years later, Moses (now voiced by Val Kilmer) and his stepbrother Rameses (Ralph Fiennes) are the closest of brothers, but things quickly change when Moses' rescue of the slave girl Tziporah (Michelle Pfeiffer) prompts long-lost siblings Miriam (Sandra Bullock) and Aaron (Jeff Goldblum) to claim him as their brother. Moses, confronted with who he really is, runs off to the desert, where God (Kilmer again), in the form of the Burning Bush, commands him to make Ramses "let my people go." Before the movie is over, we've been treated to the ten plagues and the parting of the Red Sea, which is one of the most awesome uses of computer anima-



Charioteers Moses and Rameses ©DreamWorks

in the history of animation, and parts of it are genuinely moving, particularly near the end. But whenever the film has to abandon visual pyrotechnics and concentrate on things like creating characters we care about and moving the story along, it falls flat with a resounding thud.

The plot is drawn from the book of Exodus and DeMille's *Ten Commandments*

tion I've seen.

All of the computer animation in the film is superb. The chariot race that opens the film is dizzying, the Angel of Death sequence is genuinely chilling, and, it can't be said enough, the parting of the Red Sea is a real show-stopper. But the actual hand-drawn animation is rather uneven and not all that impressive. The most convincing-



looking characters are Moses and Tziporah. Otherwise, Miriam looks awfully well-fed for a Hebrew slave, and the animators simply don't know how to invest their characters with any personality. The voice cast isn't much help. The studios have to stop hiring stars to provide animation voices and simply concentrate on getting the best actors. Admittedly, the all-star voice cast of *Antz* did a great job, but there isn't one vocal performance in *The Prince of Egypt* worth singling out.

The songs are truly dreadful. Except for Ofra Haza's haunting *Deliver Us* and the climactic *When You Believe* (which Michelle Pfeiffer sings quite nicely), every other musical number really stinks. The songs were written by Stephen Schwartz (*Godspell*), who was the lyricist on Disney's *Pocahontas* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. I don't know if he has ever written music before, but he obviously has no ear for melody. Because of the nature of the story, there are no "funny" numbers like *Hakuna Matata*, but did the songs have to be this turgid?

Katzenberg has made a big deal about how *Prince* has no wisecracking camels or singing teacups, because such elements wouldn't fit with this very serious story. Fine, but the movie is so solemn, so heavy, so weighed down with significance that a lot of it is just dull. (I don't know if you've noticed, but DeMille's *Ten Commandments* is just about the height of campy excess). The last thing you want in an animated film is a lot of static, dialogue-heavy scenes, but that's exactly what we get here. Something should have been added to *Prince* to give it some life. I admit that *Mulan* had too much slapstick and comic relief, but *Prince* goes too far in the other direction. This movie's idea of comic relief is to cast Steve Martin and Martin Short as the palace magicians, and then give them nothing to do.

It was said that Katzenberg raided Disney for animators when he started DreamWorks, but the closing credits give no evidence of that. The only familiar names listed are James Baxter, Duncan Marjoribanks and Kathy Zielinski, but none of them served as directing animators on *Prince*. Instead, it seems, they just sort of helped out on the sidelines.

I don't want to make *The Prince of Egypt* sound like some kind of disaster, because it's not. Anyone with an interest in animation owes it to him-or-herself to see this film for the computer animation alone. There are moments in this film that are quite powerful, and it's almost impossible to watch the slaves' final exodus from Egypt.

-Scott Sentinella

## Antz

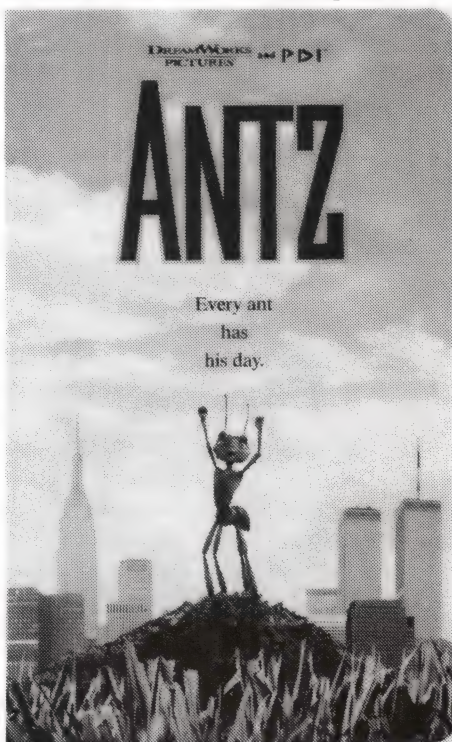
83 minutes

Directed by Eric Darnell and Tim Johnson

Written by Todd Alcott, Chris Weitz and Paul Weitz

Featuring the voices of: Woody Allen (Z), Dan Aykroyd (Chip), Anne Bancroft (Queen), Jane Curtin (Muffy), Danny Glover (Barbados), Gene Hackman (General Mandible), Jennifer Lopez (Azteca), Sharon Stone (Princess Bala), Sylvester Stallone (Weaver), Christopher Walken (Colonel Cutter), Paul Mazursky, John Mahoney, Grant Shaud.

*Antz*, or Jeffrey Katzenberg's revenge, as it's called in Hollywood, is a pretty darn good computer-animated feature. Having been moved up from its original release date of March 26, 1999, *Antz* opens about



six weeks before *A Bug's Life*, Disney/Pixar's own computer-animated film about insects. Mr. Katzenberg, former president of Disney, was at least partially responsible for the studio's animation rebirth in the early '90s, but now he's got his own studio (DreamWorks), and he's going to stick it to Mickey Mouse and Michael Eisner every chance he gets.

With that said, there's no question that *Antz* works quite well. It's effective enough that you have to wonder if *A Bug's Life* won't seem redundant by the time it comes out. *Antz* doesn't have the wit of *Toy Story*, and its screenplay should have been a whole lot funnier, but it does boast an incredible

all-star cast of voices, and the computer animation by Pacific Data Images is really fabulous.

Woody Allen is the voice of Z, a worker ant who's fed up with being a drone. After a whirl on the dance floor with Princess Bala (Sharon Stone), Z is smitten with the royal beauty, but she's already engaged to the glowering General Mandible (Gene Hackman). Z changes places with his best friend Weaver (Sylvester Stallone), a big, muscle-bound soldier ant who's set to march in an army revue past the royal family. Unfortunately, the soldiers are immediately sent into battle against a platoon of giant, acid-spewing termites, and little Z turns out to be the only survivor. Returning home, he's hailed as a hero, but after a series of misunderstandings, he winds up lost in Central Park with Princess Bala.

There's a whole lot of material in *Antz* dealing with the needs of the individual versus the needs of society, and the filmmakers seem to be crafting an anti-Communist fable, which sounds more interesting than it actually plays out. What really matters here is the animation, which is truly spectacular. The opening shots show something like eighty thousand ants busily working their tails off in their underground city, and it's truly a sight to behold. There's a scene early in the film where all the ants roll themselves into one giant ball, and it's an absolutely amazing sight.

The individual characters in *Antz* are more quirky-looking and less cuddly than most in animation. (Judging from the trailers for *A Bug's Life*, the insects in that film look more conventionally Disney-cute). There's a slight problem here in that the Woody Allen and Sharon Stone characters look essentially the same, but the voices that come out of their mouths are so distinctive that you're not likely to get them confused.

As for all those famous voices, there's something to be said for the days when you didn't know who was doing the voice of Snow White or Maleficent, and it didn't matter; you were fully involved with the character. Every time Z or Weaver is on-screen in *Antz*, it's impossible not to think of Woody Allen and Sylvester Stallone, but these guys are really very good, and so is Sharon Stone as Princess Bala. Dan Aykroyd and Jane Curtin are a riot in their one brief sequence as a couple of snooty, upper-class wasps (in every sense of the word) named Chip and Muffy, and if you absolutely have to hire celebrity voices for animation, you can only hope that they're as good as the ones in *Antz*.

There's a lot of impressive stuff in *Antz*,



like the scene where Z and Princess Bala get stuck in a piece of gum, and it does look like the success of the film (along with that of *Anastasia*, *Space Jam* and *Beavis and Butthead Do America*) proves that an animated feature doesn't necessarily have to be from Disney in order to be a hit. But only Disney's films so far have been true blockbusters, and it seems that DreamWorks, Disney, Fox, Warner Bros. and Paramount keep cutting smaller and smaller pieces of the same pie. With DreamWorks also counting on *The Prince of Egypt* to hit a home run, I don't know if they're really ready to compete with Disney yet, but *Antz* isn't a bad start.

- Scott Sentinella

## Princess Mononoke

Written and Directed by Hayao Miyazaki

*Mononoke Hime* was a phenomenon in Japan. In 1997 it made more money than any other film in the history of the medium in that country. Since then it has gotten a reputation as something special. Possibly the best animated film to ever come out of that country.

The reason for this reputation is basically because of its adult content. It is a violent film, and at times mean-spirited, and I just don't mean in the usual sense either, although it's that too. This is about mean spirits. What writer-director Hayao Miyazaki has done is create a new religious epic.

The film begins in a forest in northeastern Japan during the 13th century AD. A Tatar Gami (dying god with wormlike things coming out of it) is rampaging through the forest killing everything in its path. Our hero, Ashitaka (Yoji Matsuda), the last prince of Emishi people, who were in Japan before the Japanese got there, manages to kill off the diety, but only after it puts a curse on him in the form of a fatal rash. The local shaman (Mitsuko Mori) tells him the only way to save his life is to go to a sacred forest in the west where people may not enter and ask the Shishi Gami (a deerlike god of life and death) for its help. So our hero saddles up on his faithful antelope Yakkle and the two gallop off to confront destiny.

On his travels, Ashitaka comes across civilization, which means that he gets run out of town pretty quick. His only friend is a monk named Jiko (Kaori Kobayashi), who appears to be comic relief and unlike most of most of the other characters, looks Japanese. He has an ulterior motive, but we're not exactly sure what it is.

As our hero and his trusty antelope

approach the sacred forest, they come across a group of people carrying supplies back home. But they are attacked by a giant pack of wolves, and it is on the back of one of these we meet the title character, San (Yuriko Ishida), the Princess Mononoke. Ashitaka manages to save a couple of victims, including one named Koroku (Masahiko Nishimura), who babbles a lot.

Make no mistake, this is not some eco-fable like some have mentioned. This is a story about power, and the old gods are in conflict with a humanity barely in the iron age. It's actually difficult at times to figure out who Miyazaki wants us to root for.



The much-anticipated *Mononoke Hime*

© Studio Ghibli Ltd. © Buena Vista Home Entertainment

Koroku lives in a fort next to an iron mine, which is run by Lady Eboshi (Yuko Tanaka) and her assistant Gonza (Tsunehiko Kamijyo). Both these people are shown to be actually dedicated upstanding people who want the best for their

people, and the minors and smelters, the latter of whom are women are quite genuinely fond of them. Suddenly, San attacks, and after a pretty nifty battle scene, our hero winds up with her in the forest.

We are now into the world of Shinto, the Japanese religion, where everything has a spirit. Some, such as the maraca-like Kodama are benign, and others like the monkey gods, are not. The two main divine antagonists Moro (Akihiro Miwa), the wolf-god, who's adopted San, and Okkoto (Hisaya Morishige) the Boar god, are not actually all that nice, the latter one especially. The Shishi Gami appears to be benign, but actually we can't be sure.

Unlike most Japanese animation, the craftsmanship is top notch, nearly as good as the top domestic product. The climax is pretty extraordinary, and the vistas depicted are gorgeous.

But this is an alien story about an alien culture, and while it is pretty straightforward, there's a lot of obscurity which might put off those who are not already in the know. We'll have to see what Neil Gaiman does with his translation to see if it really is as overrated as it seems.

-Eric Lurio

## The King and I

Directed by Richard Rich

About four years ago, I was researching an article on the making of a certain animated film, and I had to speak to the company's lawyer about some of the machinations that went on. One of my questions was why the film was made into a musical over the director's objections. "Animated features have to be musicals," the lawyer said with a snide tone of voice.

Apparently, there is some obscure couple of paragraphs in the California penal code that says feature 'toons have to be musicals....and they have to have funny animal sidekicks....and they have to have moronic villians with magic powers. There's no other way to explain it.

It actually could have worked! But alas, it doesn't. The worst part of it is, is that you can see bits and pieces that are thoroughly charming.

The rendition of "Getting to Know You" is turned into a field trip around the environs of Bangkok, and it's absolutely beautiful--It's the highlight of the film. Unfortunately, Rich animaton has pretty much betrayed the original by twisting the plot around and turning it into saturday morning fare.

The film begins on a CGI ship, in the





*The King and I* was immediately renamed "The King and Eyesore" by hard-core animation fans © Warner Bros.

middle of a storm, looking though his magic mirror the evil Kralahome (Ian Richardson) decides to scare the bejesus out of Anna (voiced by Miranda Richardson & sung by Christiane Noll) and her son Louis (Adam Wylie), by creating a sea monster. So they whistle a happy tune. This ruins the meaning of the song in the context of the plot. Writers Peter Bakalian, Jacqueline Feather and David Seidler deserve to be smacked upside the head. Children aren't stupid! While it isn't necessary (nor sometimes even advisable) to slavishly follow the original staging, completely ignoring the cadance of the original play altogether isn't a sound idea at all.

For example: during the "It's a Puzzlement" number, while the King (Martin Vidnovic) soliloquizes, CGI idols (done nicely by Pentafour Software of Banglor, India) try to sneak up on him, thereby making us ignore what he is saying and driving Rama the panther nuts. This is totally useless.

Also, the romance between the concubine Tuptim (Armi Arabe & Tracy Venner Warren) and the Crown Prince (David Burnham & Alan Hong) is badly handled. In the original, Tuptim's lover was the fellow who had brought her from Burma. Changing him into the Crown Prince really doesn't help anything and, in fact, lessens the impact of what is going on and having seen the reactions by live audiences to both the 1950s movie and the 1996 Broadway production, kids can understand what is going on just as well as the grownups. The climax is really ridiculous.

However Richard Rich and his top henchmen Patrick Gleeson and Colm Duggan do a more than adequate job ani-

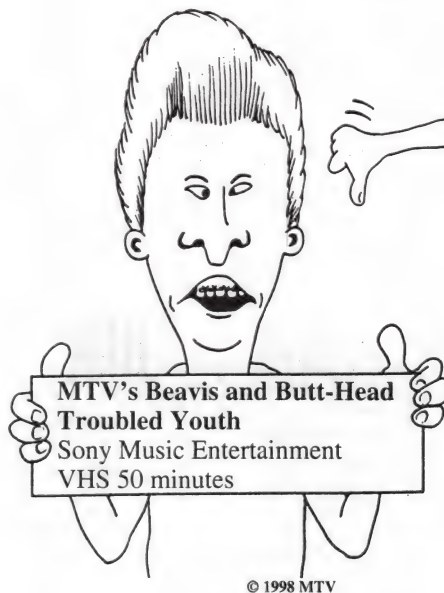
ating. The backgrounds are really well done, and the colors are bright and vibrant. It really seems that they managed to get to Thailand to get the flavor of the place.

One of the more annoying things about Rich's movies is that there is always a character who tells the audience how dumb he thinks the whole thing is. The character of Master Little

(Darryl Hammond) had the kids in stitches, but otherwise added nothing to the movie.

It will probably be out on video soon, at a discount. The one redeeming feature about this mess is that they will never do an animated version of *Oklahoma*.

-Eric Lurio



One might say you'll either love or hate Beavis and Butt-Head. I've felt both ways.

Okay, "love" might be a bit too strong of a word, but despite my initial dismissal of the series as, well, garbage, I've come to appreciate it, albeit on a crude level.

My first exposure to the pair was a viewing of creator Mike Judge's initial short, *Frog Baseball* at an animation festival. Some audience members loved it. I found it revolting and sadistic with no redeeming value whatsoever.

Then the pair appeared on MTV's *Liquid Television*, and later got their own series. My memories of the first short kept me away from the show. All through the media controversies such as the "fire" episode, I almost wanted to watch it just to spite those who demanded it be taken off the air—I might not have liked the show, but I'd be damned if I'd jump on the censorship bandwagon.

But censored it was, and the furor died down, and one day someone practically tied me down to watch an episode.

I laughed. The horror! The shame! The guilt!

Around that time a couple of unrelated shorts by Judge showed up on *Saturday Night Live*, and I began to see this upstart might have something to contribute after all.

As I watched more B&B the more I got the "joke". These guys

aren't heroes to be emulated, they're idiots to be pitied, and it's a sad truth that most of us have known people like them at some point in our lives. What really turned me around, though, were fleeting moments of social satire, embodied in charac-

ters such as their flower-child teacher and their flag-waving conservative neighbor.

But those moments were brief indeed, and their ilk would not see proper development until Judge and FOX brought us *King of the Hill*, one of my favorite programs ever (animated or otherwise)—but that's another review.

So, back to the tape. This is the latest compilation of shorts from the series, bereft of the music video commentary. To be honest, I haven't watched any other of the releases, but I doubt it's any better or worse than its predecessors. It is what it is. It provides what you'd expect—two morons doing really stupid and disgusting things and inexplicably getting away with it. If you've seen *Beavis and Butt-Head* episodes and hated them, there's nothing here that will change your mind. But if you're a fan, you'll want to expand your collection.

Buy it. Or rent it. Or don't. Beavis and Butt-Head will remain clueless either way.

-Jay Pennington





# PUBLISHER TORIAL



**"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness,"**  
--Charles Dickens *A Tale of Two Cities*

You are probably wondering what's been happening at your favorite animation magazine. As patient and loyal readers, I feel you deserve an explanation.

Midway through 1998 I accepted an assignment to work on a global software integration project using the SAP system (Systemanalyse and Programmentwicklung) from Germany.

Originally thought to be a two month tour-of-duty, the project evolved into a complex and time-consuming morass of endless problems, minute details and unexpected situations. A parade of testing, training and verification consumed my waking hours with precious little time for magazine work.

I was fortunate to be teamed with an excellent engineer, Mohammad Rahimi, who helped me survive the project with most of my sanity intact.

One of our readers wrote: "When I see that big white ANiMATO! envelope in the mailbox, it brings a smile to my face." While this made me happy to know a reader was pleased with the magazine, I was also frustrated by the situation which made it impossible to complete the issue.

To keep ANiMATO! on a timely course for 1999 we are doing something a little different. Dewey McGuire, cheeky editor of *McBoing-Boing's The Journal of Drawings in Motion*, will be the editor and layout guy on issue 41. This will give readers a different editorial perspective and I can "catch my breath" while working on issue 42.

I would like to thank all our readers who have been polite and patient during this awkward and difficult time.

Since the last issue, quite a number of our contributors have covered themselves in glory. Jim Siergey and Tom Roberts

contributed several strips to *Time* magazine's Drawing Board section. Amid Amidi is an associate editor with *Animation World* magazine and editor/publisher of *Animation Blast*. Michelle Klein-Häss has been named associate editor for Michael Swanigan's *ToOn* magazine. Andrew Osmond did an excellent two-part cover story for *Animerica* magazine on Hayao Miyazaki. Dewey McGuire is now the most famous animation guy in Iowa by getting quoted on the *Animaland* video box and sales brochure.

With regards to future issues, we have exciting and interesting articles on tap, including a Mort Walker

interview by Gord Wilson, *The Worlds of Gerry Anderson* Part 2 by Richard Holliss, *Blues Clues* and *Rocket Robin Hood* by Judy Reboy, *Screwy Squirrel* by Martin Goodman, *Histeria!*, *A Closer Look* by Eric Costello, *Batman's 100* by Thomas Drake, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, *Roger Rabbit*, and *Super Saturday* by David Krell, *Al Eugster* by John Province, *Bob Givens* and *Pete Alvarado* by Glenn Anton, *Don Messick* by Brett Rogers, *Technicolor Cartoons* by Jere Guldin.

Finally, you may have noticed the page count on this special edition. We put together this issue as our way of celebrating the first fifteen years of ANiMATO! Now that we are entering our sixteenth year, I'd like to request our readers to "buckle up," because it's going to be a wild and bumpy ride.



Dewey McGuire as seen by artist Dewey McGuire

## mcBOING BOING'S

THE JOURNAL OF DRAWINGS IN MOTION

ISSUE NUMBER FIVE      NOVEMBER, 1995

### Blutopia

By Dewey McGuire



Over the course of the nine-year run of its Popeye series, the Fleischer staff gradually streamlined the look of their films. Starting out in 1933, Popeye and Bluto were at least as rough-edged as their coddles in E.C. Segar's classic comic strip, "Thimble Theatre." Considering Segar had been building this one-eyed sailor into a familiar, likeable character since 1929, the Fleischers had a serious challenge in translating that unlikely appeal to the screen. Having succeeded almost immediately at this tricky adaptation, the crew could eventually begin to experiment with a mix of elements that were peculiarly Segar, a mix that would become all the more contrasting in the last five years of the series.

Those 1933 Popeyes look pretty raunchy next to the more evolved films that were to follow. The early films are set not in the tough, shanty-town world of Thimble Theatre, but in the Betty Boop world, populated with a cast of grotesque, anthropomorphic

(CONTINUES ON PAGE 7)

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# ERIC FOGEL

DEATHMATCH MAKER TO THE STARS

by Chuck Miller

## *A talk with the creator of MTV's Celebrity Deathmatch*

Referee Mills Lane stands at the center of the ring, waiting for the fighters to join him for some pre-contest instructions. "Now I want a good clean fight," he says to the combatants, "defend yourself at all times."

But this is not a Las Vegas heavyweight boxing match - the opponents are Rosie O'Donnell and Oprah Winfrey; or at least clay representations of same. Oh, by the way, Mills Lane is a stop-motion figure, too - as are the announcers and audience.

Welcome to the world of *Celebrity Deathmatch*, MTV's newest animated hit series. Each episode is a mixture of comedy, satire and wrestling, as two famous actors or singers battle to the death - literally - inside a wrestling ring. Originally created as a five-minute animated short on

MTV's *Cartoon Sushi* anthology series, *Deathmatch* has just been picked up for a second season. Eric Fogel, the show's creator, couldn't be happier.

"I think the seed of *Celebrity Deathmatch* was planted when I saw the original *King Kong* classic, the RKO version," said Fogel in an exclusive interview with ANiMATO!. "There was a sequence in the film where Kong is wrestling this big old dinosaur. That sequence really stuck with me. It was so brilliantly done, it had an improvisational feel to it. I just thought, man, if I could do something like that and develop a

show around a wrestling match, I thought that would be a real hoot. As a kid, I grew up watching Hulk Hogan, Captain Lou Albano and the Junkyard Dog. These guys appealed to me mostly because they were so much larger than life. To me, they were like living cartoons. I was familiar with the



Rosie and Oprah square off

subject matter, and the idea of combining celebrities in a wrestling ring - it was the perfect combination. It was something I was just dying to try. And luckily, I got a chance to do it."

While attending New York University's Tisch School of The Arts in the late 1980's, Fogel learned how to turn his self-drawn comic strips and flip books into cel animation. His first creation, *The Mutilator*, a post-apocalyptic satire of life in the lower East Side, won NYU's Excellence in Animation award, and toured with Spike and Mike's Sick and Twisted Animation festival.

After graduation, Fogel continued to make short films for the touring festivals, including *Expiration Date* and *Mutilator II: Underworld*. In 1993, Fogel was contacted by MTV's Abby Terkuhle, who was looking for new animated ideas for her network.

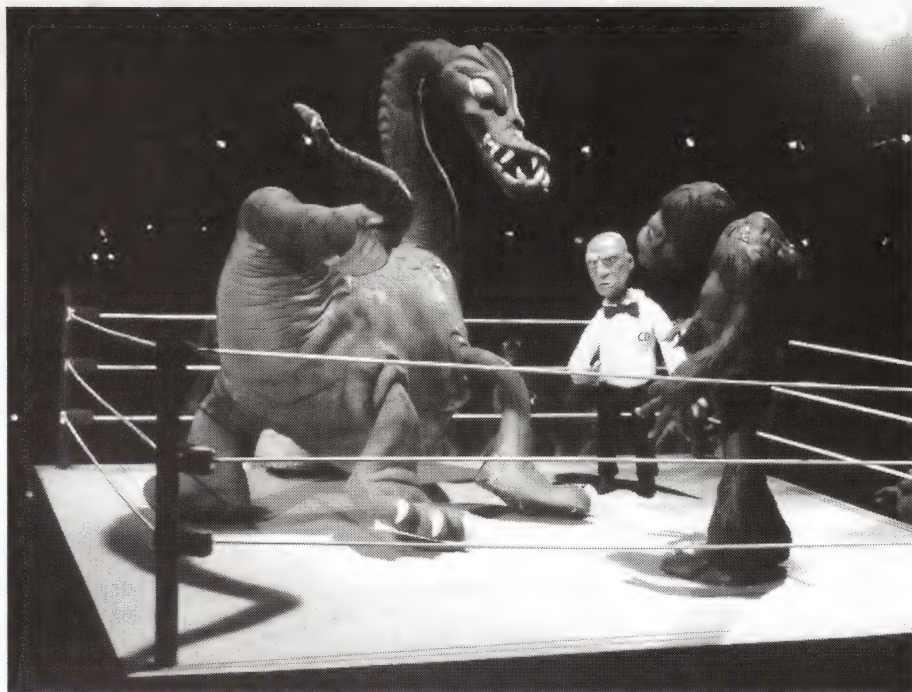
Fogel arrived at MTV with his trusty sketchbook. After his first meeting with the network, he had earned his first animated series, *The Head*. "The Head was based literally on a sketch that I did - I keep a sketchbook handy, and I drew a picture of a guy with this enormous head. And I just developed a story around it, thinking what would be in there, and I came up with the concept that there's an alien named Roy that lives inside there, and there's a weird sort of relationship that these two characters share, this symbiotic relationship. Basically, I presented them with a storyboard that I did for a five-minute pilot, and presented it to Abby Terkuhle. Mike Judge, who had created *Beavis and Butt-Head*, ironically was in that meeting when I presented the boards for the first time. I remember them looking over these drawings that I had done, and they were just laughing and laughing about it. I knew there that this thing was going to go."



And go it did. *The Head* was paired with another animated series, *The Maxx*, as part of MTV's *Oddities*, an umbrella title for both programs. *The Head* lasted for two seasons, received an award for Outstanding Animated Series at a Canadian television festival, and produced a graphic novel from Pocket Books. "The *Head* always seemed like a strange concept to bring to MTV. I was sitting on it for a while, because I didn't think MTV would be the place to produce this type of show. But they talked to me about wanting to create a series called *Oddities*, which would create a format for very bizarre stories, an anthology series where you would have just really bizarre characters that you would not see anywhere else. So it ended up making a lot of sense for the *Head* to appear in that environment."

In 1996, MTV ended the *Oddities* show, canceling both *The Maxx* and *The Head*. "The thing I found with MTV is more than anything, they're about change, they're constantly changing their image, based on the tastes of the masses. So they're constantly looking for new and different things to try."

At that point, Fogel went back to the drawing board. Inspired by the work of stop-motion animation pioneer Ray Harryhausen, Fogel began working on a clay version of what he envisioned as a wrestling match featuring the two most evil people in America - Charles Manson versus Marilyn Manson. The five-minute short, produced by Eric Fogel and John



Harryhausen tribute? Nessie and Bigfoot make a rare appearance

Lynn, was quietly released on MTV's *Cartoon Sushi* series. The response to the short was so tremendous, that

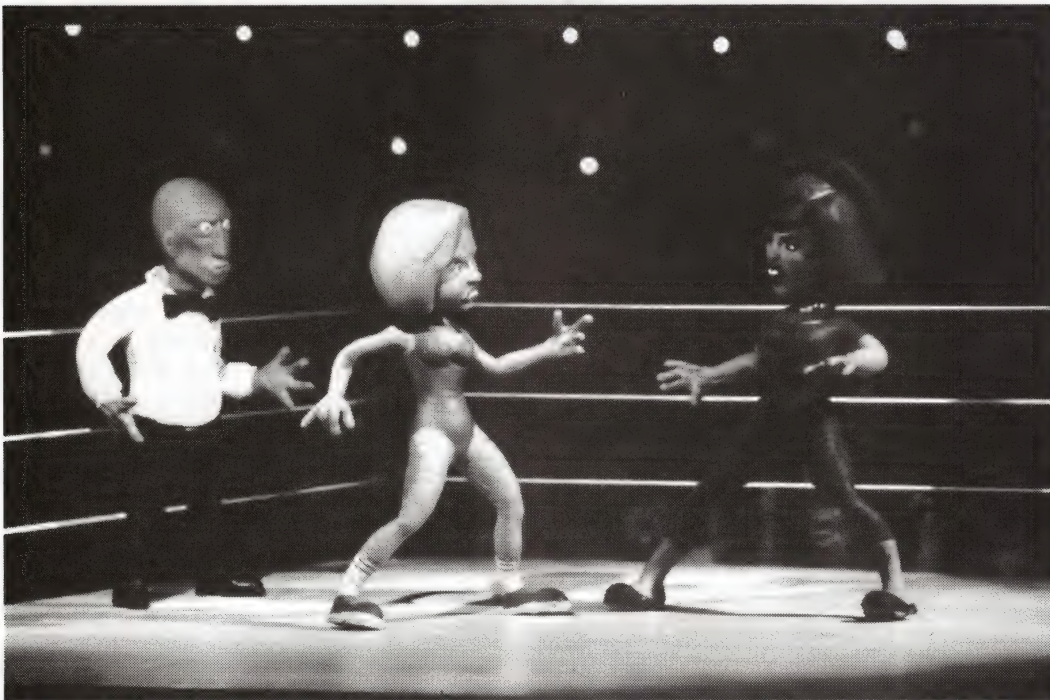
MTV asked Fogel to create three matches that could be used as "counter-programming" against the Super Bowl halftime show.

That program, *Celebrity Deathmatch Deathbowl '98*, scored a 4.6 rating and a 7 share, and featured celebrity media feuds in the squared circle - Howard Stern versus

Kathie Lee Gifford, Pamela Anderson Lee versus RuPaul, and Hanson versus the Spice Girls (a match that was declared a no-contest when Marilyn Manson appeared and dropped a lighting rig on all eight fighters).

Deathbowl '98's ratings were so high that MTV gave Fogel the green light to create 13 episodes of *Celebrity Deathmatch* for MTV's prime-time schedule. The first episode, carefully programmed to air be-

fore the final episode of *Seinfeld*, featured Jerry Seinfeld in a match against *Home Improvement* star Tim Allen - a match Seinfeld almost won until his co-stars Jason Alexander, Julia Louis-Dreyfus and Michael Richards, angry that Seinfeld ended the show (and possibly their acting careers), turned "heel" on the star and helped Allen win the match. The series has recently been picked up for a second season, and is as heavily promoted throughout the schedule. "We've had responses - mostly positive. Most of the celebrities that contact us are simply asking for copies of their fights for their own personal archives. And some have been more vocal - Marilyn Manson speaks



In your dreams: Mills Lane, Hillary Rodham Clinton and Monica Lewinsky





Two "stand-up" guys: Tim Allen and Jerry Seinfeld

very highly of the show, and Howard Stern also was talking about his deathmatch on the air. And of course, Kathie Lee Gifford was actually quoted in the *Globe* as calling us a bunch of sick puppies. She also doesn't have the sense of humor for this type of show."

Each character - the wrestlers, the announcers, the referee - are cast in foam rubber over a poseable armature, and the heads are clay. "What we're trying to do is simulate the look of clay, but without all the hassles of working with clay - the melting under the lights, crushing the figure every time you handle it, dirt, all these things that are associated - and also the weight of clay and the character toppling over because the ankles aren't strong enough and the puppet is too tall and heavy. Foam rubber does away with a lot of those problems, and allows us to animate more efficiently. I have found, having done both stop-motion and cel animation, although stop-motion is tedious for different reasons, I find it to be much more satisfying because to me, it's much more immediate than the long and drawn out process of cel animation, where it takes

months and months to go from the drawn image to seeing it on the screen, whereas stop motion has the immediacy, you're creating the animation under the camera and can essentially watch the shot down as soon as you're done and see if you've done everything right or wrong."

Each three-match episode takes 4-5 months to create, with Fogel supervising over sixteen animators working in eight shoot rooms. "We've got an amazing team

between the celebrities and the commentators. So Stacy was born."

Mills Lane, the referee for *Celebrity Deathmatch* who in real life has refereed heavyweight championship bouts, actually provided his own voice for the series. "We called Mills Lane up and asked if he would be part of the show. He said he'd be happy to do it, how much would we pay him. He recently told me that when he was in Las Vegas, kids now run up to him and

here, these guys are working 12-14 hour days, they've really done a hell of a job to make this show work."

The show's main characters, announcers Nick Diamond, Johnny Gomez and Stacy Cornbred, were inspired, according to Fogel, from announcers of another square-circle sport. "I actually based Gomez and Diamond on commentators that I observed in boxing. Johnny Gomez was modeled after this suave classier announcers, and Nick was from the streets, an ex-boxer himself. So he's got a little more urban sensibility. Stacy Cornbred was also original to the show - I wanted to have a female element there, and someone who would be celebrity-friendly and run interference



Loyal cast of *Seinfeld* with Johnny Gomez and Stacy Cornbred





Eric Fogel

became the running joke. We stopped picking on Don King, because we felt it was enough already. We didn't want to have too many fingers pointing at us and saying we were trying to imitate *South Park*."

An MTV promotion on their website, asking fans to contribute their own possible "deathmatches," had over 400,000 hits in a few weeks. "We got requests ranging from Barney versus the Teletubbies, it really ran the gamut. We're actually devoting an episode to the Viewer's Choice - it was a chore to have to weed through all those requests. There were some bizarre ones, and strangely enough, one of the more popular requests was Dolly Parton in a deathmatch. Strange - or maybe not so strange - people wanted to see her represented in clay and foam."

The series has been recently picked up for a second season, and Fogel wants to explore new avenues and new matches. "I would love to continue developing this show and expanding the scope of this show. I'm going to make an effort to do that during the second season. In terms of ratcheting up the levels of drama - and also expanding beyond the deathmatch ring and trying other types of events, more along the lines of *American Gladiators*, where you've got obstacle courses and jousting. Almost like a *Battle of the Network Stars*."

And when asked if Fogel could put his Head characters in the ring against MTV's first kings of animation, Beavis and Butt-Head, for a tag team match, who would win, Fogel answered without hesitation, "I would love to put the Head in the ring. I miss those guys. I would love to bring them back. I think Jim and Roy would win that match. Ask Mike Judge that question, he'll give you a different answer."



say, 'Look, it's the guy from *Celebrity Deathmatch*.'"

Another celebrity providing his own voice is recurring announcer and wrestling heavyweight champion "Stone Cold" Steve Austin. "We have a very solid relationship with the World Wrestling Federation, and their champion, 'Stone Cold' Steve Austin has been a repeating character on the show. He does his own voice on the show, and they've been very supportive of us. They've

promoted us on their Monday night wrestling events, and we're looking to continue the relationship. We will have a deathmatch based on an existing wrestling rivalry - Stone Cold versus his promoter, Vince McMahon."

For a while, the series even had its own character that died in every episode. If an object came flying out of the ring, more often than not it would hit Don King in the front row. "For a while, killing Don King



When I first heard in late 1994 that Disney was planning to animate the legend of Mulan, my initial reaction was, "Really? Why?" At the time I was already wondering what Disney would do to American history with *Pocahontas* and French literature with *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. This material was hardly cute, comic, song-and-dance stuff. The basic story of Mulan—a young girl disguises herself as a boy so she can take her ailing father's place in the army—didn't look like the usual Disney formula to me.

Still, I was curious. I'm the type of soul who will read Victor Hugo novels and John Smith biographies if I have the chance. The fact Disney was animating Mulan made

me wonder: Who was the real Mulan? What was her world like? And what would Disney do to her story?

No one is certain where in China Mulan was born or in which dynasty she lived. Her last name has been listed variously as Mu, Zhu, Wei, and Hua. (The name Fa, which Disney uses in its film, is a Cantonese variant of the Mandarin Hua.) Whether Mulan was based on an actual female warrior or born from a writer's imagination, the tales of her triumphs have been passed down through generations of storytelling.

Mulan's story is set in northern China, an area known for its mountains and deserts. While this region could become rich farmland during times of rainfall, it was the land to the south that had prosperous farms and

cities that attracted various nomadic tribes. One of these tribes, the Tuoba clan of the Xianbei culture, despite being vastly outnumbered, managed to conquer and rule northern China.

The conquered Han Chinese lived in a society that had clearly defined women's roles. A typical girl spent her day making cloth, sewing, cooking, caring for family members and working in the fields. It was a busy life and didn't give her much free time. Depending on the wealth and education of her family and the permissiveness of the time period, a girl also might have pursued literature, calligraphy, painting, music and sports. Usually she was wed in her mid to late teens, in a marriage prearranged by her family. Her biggest chance for authority was to have a son and thus later have a dutiful daughter-in-law. In general, women were seen as second-class citizens. This was a far cry from the lives of the nomadic women, who were often accomplished horsemen and warriors.

As time went on, the two cultures began to merge together. The nomadic warriors began adopting some Chinese customs in order to maintain control over their subjects, but some military aspects of Xianbei culture remained dominant. It was some-

# SOLDIER GIRL

by Angela Kuo







time during the Northern and Southern Dynasties (AD 420-589) when an anonymous poet wrote down the earliest known version of the ballad of Mulan. Just as society had blended Chinese and Xianbei customs, the heroine of the poem was both a dutiful Chinese daughter and a warrior woman. The poem was included in an anthology of folk poetry (*yuefu*) during the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and expanded into a novel in the late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Since then it has provided inspiration for many stories, plays, operas, songs, paintings and films.

Generations of Chinese schoolchildren have committed the poem to heart: Knowing that her father is too old and frail to fight and that he has no son to take his place, Mulan decides that she will go instead. For over ten years she disguises herself as a man and serves with distinction. At the end of her service the emperor offers her riches and a government position. She turns it down, asking only for a swift horse (or camel, depending on the translation) to take her home. When Mulan returns home she puts on her lady's clothes and reveals to her astonished comrades that "he" is really a girl.

Even before Disney announced Mulan as the subject of its 36th animated feature, variations on the story already existed. After all, no mention is made in the poem of how Mulan became such a great soldier or how she so successfully concealed her identity, leaving plenty of room for other

writers to fill in the details. Sometimes Mulan falls in love with a fellow soldier and eventually marries him. Sometimes she stays in the army and continues to serve her country and her emperor. Sometimes she dies in battle or is betrayed by jealous officers. One version even has a magical monk befriend Mulan, giving her the gift of a camel with a serpent's spirit.

Okay, so the feisty, fire-breathing, smart-talking Mushu is a Disney invention. ("My ancestors sent a little lizard to protect me?" asks a bewildered Mulan upon meeting the squirrel-sized dragon.) A few changes in the story have been made as well, though not as drastically as in *Pocahontas*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, or *Hercules*, where there were major character and plot changes. Like *Beauty and the Beast*, *Mulan* holds on to the message of the source material and manages to stay with the basic outline of the story.

Originally intended as a direct-to-video release entitled *China Doll*, the Disney film went through a number of changes about two years into the animation process. An early idea of a sidekick panda (named Moo Goo Gai Panda) was quickly dumped in favor of two dragons named Yin and Yang, who in turn gave way to Mushu. The story - which had focused largely on Mulan trying to get a guy - was also dropped, and with it went Mulan's angry rebelliousness and a few songs by composer-lyricist Stephen Schwartz (lyricist for *Pocahontas* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*) which

no longer fit the character or the story.

The story team, led by Chris Sanders (*Beauty and the Beast*, *The Lion King*), worked out characters and a plot that ended up being much more faithful to the original poem. Compared to many of the other recent Disney movies, this new outline remained remarkably unchanged for over two years and the production for *Mulan* was relatively smooth and solid. David Zippel (lyricist for *Hercules*) and pop composer Matthew Wilder were hired to write new songs, four of which made the final film. (Cut musical numbers including a song called *Trust Me Babe* sung by Mushu and several songs sung by the villain Shan-Yu.) The film amounted to a total of five years and over \$100 million in production costs. And the result? A film that is true to its heart.

Like the girl in the original poem, Disney's Mulan is not particularly preoccupied with romance; in fact, she's more concerned about her father's health and trying to uphold the family name than wishing her prince would come. Not much else is said about the original Mulan's background, but Disney has added the dimension of a girl who tries to please her parents, yet feels she's always letting them down. Certainly she has the dubious distinction of being loudly declared as unmarriageable material by a village matchmaker, who finds little to admire in the outspoken, quick-thinking girl. When Mulan becomes a soldier and goes into





training camp, she finds herself a klutz and a scapegoat. After winning her comrades' respect, however, Mulan proves to be a smart and loyal soldier and becomes "one of the boys," something which the original Mulan certainly did.

The Disney version makes one of its biggest changes in the story when Mulan, after defeating the Huns in battle, is revealed to be a woman and forced to leave the army. Even though Mulan's disguise is revealed, she continues to show that she is a great warrior and superb strategist. The basic themes of loyalty to family and country, so important in the ballad of Mulan and in Chinese culture, have been preserved in the Disney version, along with the subtle commentary that women, when given the chance, can be just as accomplished as men.

Mulan is an appropriate heiress to the recent Disney line of heroines. Strong, independent and intelligent. Mulan and her predecessors Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, Pocahontas, Esmeralda and Meg could be billed as Disney's Magnificent Seven. Still, Mulan is in a class of her own as the soldier girl who, physically and mentally, can stand up for herself and face an entire army of enemy soldiers charging down the mountainside. The original Mulan would be proud.

Angela Kuo is a medical student at the Penn State College of Medicine. In her free time (what free time?) she maintains The *Mulan* FAQ and a Disney parody archive at <http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/5082>. Angela also writes a lot of silly parodies since she believes that laughter is the best medicine. This is her first article for ANiMATO!

All Graphics of *Mulan* © The Disney Company

Dear ANiMATO!,

Continued from page 4

I enjoyed Issue #37 and appreciated the tribute to Al Eugster whose name I saw many weekday afternoons watching the Fleischer/Famous Popeye films on WMUR-TV's The Uncle Gus Show. Eugster had his own unique way of rendering the Popeye cast in the animated cartoons he worked on. Thanks for the tribute.

I enjoyed the article on Mickey Mouse because it clearly states that Mickey is the most popular cartoon symbol today...which is a far cry from being the world's most popular cartoon character. As a Popeye historian, people often say to me that Mickey is the king of cartoons and Popeye is simply a member of his cartoon-court. I correct this statement by saying that "Mickey is a highly popular cartoon symbol but the Popeye cartoon series (for film and TV) is the longest running in the history of animated films." I then ask the question, if Mickey Mouse cartoons are so popular, why didn't Disney package them for television syndication during the 1950s, and why was Mickey's film career cut short in 1953 while Bugs Bunny, Woody Woodpecker, Tom and Jerry and Popeye were still going strong?

Best,

**Fred Grandinetti**

Watertown, Massachusetts

Dear Gang,

Bob pulls a prank from beyond the grave!

A friend of mine forwarded a copy of ANiMATO! #39. In it, I saw the letter from Bob Clampett. The actual voice of Willy the Wolf in the *Beany & Cecil* cartoons was provided by Walker Edmiston.

Regards,

**Mike Kazaleh**

Deland, Florida  
via fax with artwork



Willy the Wolf sketch by Mike Kazaleh

## FAN MAIL FROM SOME FLOUNDER

Dear ANiMATO!

As a Looney Tunes fan, I had to comment on the Art Davis articles. You know a studio has major talent when the lesser known artists (like Milt Franklyn, Treg Brown, and Mr. Davis) produced entertainment that stands far above many of the cartoons being produced since the golden age of theatrical shorts. A friend of mine since college (don't ask, it was many years ago) and I would go into lines of dialog from *Bowery Bugs* at the drop of a hat, and still do. This Bugs Bunny cartoon stands with the best from Jones, Freleng, and McKimson. *A Hick, A Slick, and A Chick*, and *Dough Ray Meow* are fantastic one-shot cartoons, and the Daffy Duck cartoons that he directed are all first rate. The real shame of the matter is not that Mr. Davis was let go as a director and Mr. McKimson wasn't, but that Warner Bros. didn't just keep four units active. McKimson wasn't a Jones or Freleng, but I wish people wouldn't slam him, he did direct wonderful cartoons also.

On reading the articles, it seems that there is a lot to Mr. Davis's career that could fill many articles on the golden era of cartoons. There must be many stories from his days at Fleischer's, the Charles Mintz studios, Walter Lantz's studios, the Depatie/Freleng studios, and more at the Warner's. He's one of the last links to the past, and hopeful he will be given more attention.

I have enjoyed Mr. Davis's work at Warners for many years, and will continue to for many years to come. Hope more fans will let him know that.

Sincerely,

**Hans Heidler**  
Algonquin, Illinois

### In response to Mike Kazaleh's letter:

Hames Ware was fully aware of Walker Edmiston's voice work on *Beany & Cecil* cartoons and the *Time For Beany* puppet show. Hames speculates that Bob Clampett might have had the much-admired John Carradine voice William Shakespeare Wolf in a pilot episode of *Beany & Cecil*.

We are hoping to profile Walker Edmiston in a future issue. --Patrick



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# Chuck Miller's RoundTable

**Chuck:** Hello, and welcome to the first of a series of round table discussions with various animated stars of the past and present, and their views on current events in the animation world and in general. With me tonight, from Jellystone Park, is Boo Boo Bear...

**Boo Boo:** Nice to be here, Chuck

**Chuck:** From the world of high-speed auto racing, we have Speed Racer...

**Speed:** *It's nice to be part of this Chuck I really haven't been involved in a panel discussion like this before but I know I'll do really well and win this one like I win all my races!*

**Chuck:** And from the world of international rock and roll, we have that hit singer of the 1980s, Jem.

**Jem:** Yeah, hi.

**Chuck:** So Boo Boo, what have you been up to lately?

**Boo Boo:** Well, Chuck, it hasn't been easy. Ever since Mr. Ranger allowed Yogi to wire our cabin for cable television, I haven't gotten any hibernation time.

**Chuck:** What, is Yogi watching the Cartoon Network?

**Boo Boo:** Nope...mostly the fitness channels. He finally figured out Mr. Ranger was right about all those pic-a-nic baskets, and...well...he's now rounder than the average bear. So at the crack of dawn, he's watching shows like the Fitness Pros, Body by Jake, Denise Austin, Kiana's Body Workout -

**Jem:** Yeah. All those exercise shows - you know those women on there don't even need to exercise. Do you know I

did an entire concert tour - 45 cities - on one box of corn flakes? It isn't easy to stay 5 foot 4 and 100 pounds. I tell you.

**Boo Boo:** Well, sorry, Ms. Jem, but Yogi has lost a lot of weight watching those shows. He said something to me about not being like Winnie the Pooh and going to pot.



**Chuck:** Oh my. Speed, do you have any thoughts on exercise shows?

**Speed:** *Chuck I never have time to watch exercise shows because I've been really busy competing in auto races nearly every single week and all the winnings I make have to go support my parents and my mechanic and my little brother and his chimpanzee and my girlfriend Trixie but if I ever get a chance I'll make sure to watch one of those shows they sound like a lot of fun.*

**Chuck:** Wow. So Speed, where do you race these days?

**Speed:** *It's hard for me to find a race track because the Mach V isn't set up for NASCAR running and ever since I set that 350 mph speed record at Indianapolis 500 the people won't let me compete there so I usually try circuits like Formula 1 and IMSA and NHRA and anyplace where I can collect an appearance fee.*

**Chuck:** I heard you entered a couple of races on the Wacky Racers circuit.

**Speed:** *I raced with them for two weeks Chuck but it was brutal the first race I was in some guy named Dick Dastardly stole the wheels off my Mach V and I couldn't find them until the race was over and the next week I ended up in a wreck with the Ant Hill Mob and the Slag Brothers and the third week Trixie thought I was making out with Penelope Pitstop but I was just trying to look under her hood and see what was wrong with her exhaust.*

**Jem:** Yeah. That's what they all say, car jockey.

**Boo Boo:** Mr. Racer, weren't you driving a Volkswagen GTI a year or so ago?

**Speed:** *That's only because the Mach V was sabotaged and I think Dick Dastardly was involved in that one also he's still sore because I found a way to get him transferred to some abandoned Air Force base where he spends the rest of his days chasing some carrier pigeon.*

**Boo Boo:** Gee. I tried to watch an auto race once on TV, but Yogi said there was some pro beach volleyball on ESPN and that I would have to watch TV another time.





Jem makes a point while Mr. Racer politely raise his hand before speeding...er...speaking

**Chuck:** Sounds like you guys need a video tape machine.

**Boo Boo:** We did get a VCR - it was a gift from Ranger Smith. But between you and me, Chuck...Yogi claims he's smarter than the average bear, but who do you think knows how to program that VCR? Yours truly.

**Jem:** So what? Come on, I'm here, anybody want to ask me some questions?

**Chuck:** Okay, Jem, what have you been up to lately?

**Jem:** More like what haven't I been up to lately. It all started a couple of years ago, when Kimber - my lead guitarist and one of my backup singers in the Holograms - got this new CD-Rom of Windows 95. So what does she do? Does she test it on her personal computer? Does she call the electronics store to make sure the disc is okay? No! She puts the freakin' disc into Synergy's disc drive - and lo and behold, doesn't realize that the computer that has been providing the imagery and bookkeeping and other work for the Holograms is an Apple-based computer. We're talking major crash here.

**Chuck:** That's awful.

**Jem:** That's only the beginning. The minute Rio found out I was really Jerrica Benton, he dumped me like a bag of noodles and got married to one of the Misfits. With Eric Raymond producing them and Rio and Clash doing those Michael Bolton remakes, the Misfits sold more records than we ever did.

**Chuck:** So what did you do?

**Jem:** I got a gig writing theme songs for TV shows. Mostly for the *What A Cartoon* clips on the Cartoon Network, but I recently scored a couple episodes of *Dumb and Dumber - The Series*.

**Speed:** *You really need to get out more Jem I could suggest we take a spin in my Mach V if you don't mind the fact that it doesn't have seat belts and its slowest speed is 75 miles per hour what do you say?*

**Boo Boo:** But Mr. Racer, you promised to give me a lift back to my cave.

**Speed:** *That's no problem I used to put Spreidel and Chim Chim in the trunk it's big enough for those two stowaways you could fit in there as well Boo Boo.*

**Boo Boo:** Gee, Mr. Racer. I don't think Yogi would like that.

**Jem:** 75 miles per hour, did you say?

**Speed:** *In first gear.*

**Jem:** What kind of sound system does it have?

**Speed:** *Well since the car was first manufactured in downtown Kyoto it's got the best Sony sound system you can imagine with 20-disc CD changer and thunderous speakers that have been known to shake the paint off the cars of the Car Acrobatic Team.*

**Jem:** What about your girlfriend Trixie? Won't she be suspicious if I catch a lift home with you?

**Speed:** *No that isn't a problem she came along with me to the roundtable and so all I have to do is put her in the back trunk with Boo Boo and everything will be just fine as long as I don't hit too many potholes.*

**Chuck:** Well. Looks like we're all out of time. So join us in our next issue of **ANiMATO!** when we'll meet up with some more animated stars of the past on Chuck Miller's RoundTable.



With the exception of Chuck Miller, all characters depicted belong to their respective studios, companies and syndicates which hold the copyrights thereof.

No animals were seriously harmed during the production of this illuminating discussion.





Continued from page 59

didn't stop the festival committee from trying to make it possible: for the first time that I'm aware of, all the competition screenings and a few of the others were repeated. The overall quality of the competition films seems to be on an upswing: although there seemed to be a few too many non-narrative films which strove to Art, the audience enthusiastically laughed and applauded during the screenings, and post-screening crowd chatter was generally positive.

*Geri's Game*, *Famous Fred*, and *Redux Riding Hood* had the audience in stitches. Seeing *Redux Riding Hood* in full was a wonderful treat, as Disney had showed off the incomplete film at their booth in '96, and of course it was nominated for an Oscar. I hope the company gets moving and releases it and the other fairy tale projects it had (has?) in production. Also, after having seen every animated short nominated for an Oscar last year, I'm puzzled as to how *Geri's Game*, though entertaining, could have beaten the inventively designed and uproariously funny *Redux Riding Hood*.

*Major's Nose* and *Night of the Carrots*, from Russia and Estonia respectively, were delightfully surreal, with their seemingly disjointed narratives having rhythms which could only be described as unique (or, less charitable, maddening). *Major's Nose* in particular made excellent use of mixed media and quirky design. *Bingo*, *Millennium Bug*, and especially *Busby* proved that there are still plenty of fresh ideas in computer animation. *Busby*, a black-and-white tribute to Busby Berkeley musicals using a computer-composited collage of filmed human hands, garnered the best response of the three by far. The applause started as the film's crescendo approached, and only increased after the credits rolled. Oh, and despite my earlier comment about non-narrative films, *Miles From Anywhere*, nearly four minutes of pixilated ground and grass surfaces, was captivating, almost hypnotic.

The last two films I'll mention gave somber pause, though for altogether different reasons. *Silence* is an autobiographical film about a girl's childhood from Nazi

Germany to a concentration camp, and then, after the war, to relatives in Switzerland. *Silence's* power comes not from the obvious horrors of the camps, but of the more subtle effects the experience had on the narrator's family and her psyche. In particular, the final sentence of the film's narration brings the point of the film—and its title—home.

The other film is the starkly-drawn black-and-white *Black Burlesque*, which featured Nazis, cross-dressers, bizarre sexual acts, and concentration camps for an incredibly unfunny seven minutes. True to its title, *Burlesque* is perverse and shocking. But it doesn't entertain. I didn't find it even remotely funny, and neither did the crowd. (There is a possibility that it's the result of being shown just a few minutes after *Silence*, but I doubt it.) Surprisingly, *Black Burlesque* went on to win a Jury Prize. I don't even pretend to understand.

What I do understand is that, as ever, the Ottawa Festival provided equal parts familiarity and freshness. My hats off to the people who pull off the enormous amounts of work behind the scenes; I'm looking forward to Ottawa 2000.



Emru Townsend is the founder and former editor of *fps* magazine.



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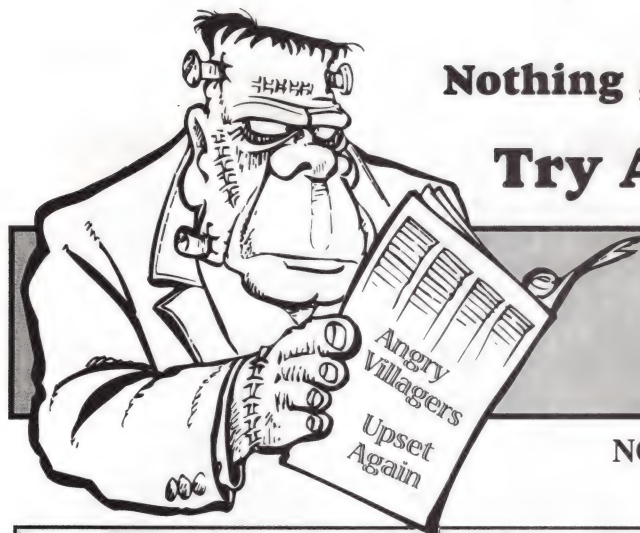
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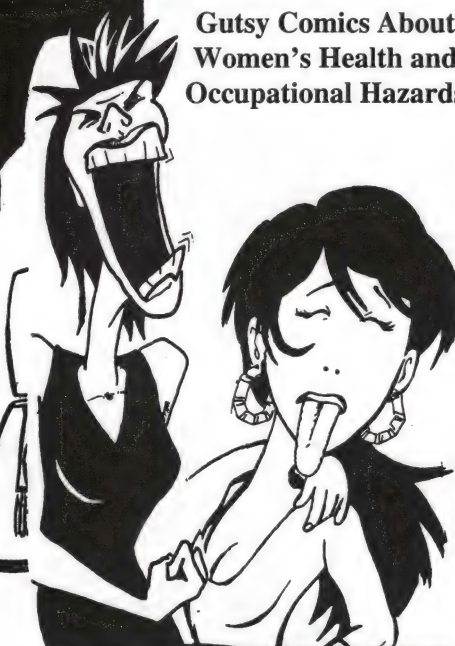


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*Continued from page 10*

string of Arnold-Head Christmas lights to hang year round. And who knows what else. As for Craig's next project. "Possibly in computer animation, because in that case, you retain most of the freedom and do most of the work." Can't wait.

And lastly, if the funds were endless, if you had one wish, if you discovered Barbara Eden in a bottle on the beach, what would you wish for Craig Bartlett? "Travel. Be creative. Screw around. Work hard." How about open your own animation company, hire everyone you know who's great and put out your own cartoons? "Yeah."

Until that day, it seems to me Craig is pretty close right now.



**MARY DORIS BERLINER CAIN**

*Continued from page 21*

In addition to her love of animation, Mary enjoyed traveling the world on cruise ships. In 1956 she was on board the *Ile de France* which had just left the harbor from New York City when the *Stockholm* and *Andria Doria* collided at sea. The *Ile de France* rescued hundreds of the shipwrecked survivors and Mary wrote extensively about her impressions of the rescue.

Mary remained with her "family" at Playhouse Pictures until her retirement in 1991. Throughout her many years at Playhouse, Mary worked on all of their commercials - Western Airlines, *Shaggy Dog*, Ford, *Old Pro*, Falstaff, the first *Peanuts* commercial, as well as Kellogg's and Rice Krispies. She continued to work at the odd ink and paint jobs from Playhouse until her death of lung cancer in 1996.



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# FLIP THE FROG



by Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman

For every unforgettable animated character created since the days of Gertie the Dinosaur there are dozens who have been marginal, poorly remembered, or totally lost save for a few passing references in written histories of animation. The most difficult tests for a series or character to pass are those of time and popularity, and as a result many cartoons of the past have been consigned to existence only on obscure videos aimed at a small and precise market of aficionados. History is often unkind as well; modern critics take note of the cartoon's flaws and faults and the usual consensus seems to be that they died a deserving and lamentable death. There are rarely, if ever, re-evaluations of this stance.

One such series thoroughly deserving of reexamination is Ub Iwerks' *Flip the Frog* (1930-1933). Largely forgotten today and castigated by historians who have reviewed the series, Flip is no more than a notable relic in the dustbin of animation history. If, however one examines the series and character in relation to its times it may be true that despite its flaws, Flip is one of the most underappreciated cartoons produced in the 1930's. It may also be true that Flip the Frog was a victim of several extraneous forces which most critics do not mention in their accounts.

## Birth of an Idea

1928 was a great year for the man born Ubbe Ert Iwwerks. He had been Walt Disney's partner, with only a short hiatus, since 1919. Ub's triumphs that year were impressive: He designed Mickey Mouse in order to replace Oswald the Rabbit, who had been lost in the infamous Mintz takeover and animated the first Mickey short (*Plane Crazy*) single-handedly in one of the most amazing feats of freehand animation ever recorded. As the studio began to get notices and Iwerk's confidence grew he copyrighted a character of his own creation, a carefree frog that he hoped could find a place in Disney's rising fortunes. Unfortunately, Disney was not keen on the idea of developing Ub's frog. Since Walt was in complete creative control the character was pushed to the back burner while Disney put Mickey Mouse before the public as the studio's first great "star."

Iwerks was kept busy enough animating and produced such legendary works as *The Skeleton Dance* (the first Silly Symphony) in collaboration with Walt and music director Carl Stalling. In 1929 Ub began directing Silly Symphonies for the first time with *Hell's Bells*. The frog was forgotten for the moment and there was little extra budget to work with in any case.

Disney put most of his profits back into his cartoon shorts and his distributor, Pat Powers, was cleverly pilfering much of those profits to begin with. Yet for Powers that was not enough: He convinced Iwerks to leave Disney in return for \$300 a week in salary, his own studio, and creative control of all cartoons he produced under the aegis of Power's Celebrity Pictures.

Iwerks was confident enough to make the move; not only had he gained experience as a director, Disney paid him \$150 weekly (twice Walt's own salary) in recompense for his incomparable abilities. Iwerks had been chafing under the tight creative restrictions placed on him by Disney as well and Power's offer represented a long-awaited opportunity. In late January 1930 Ub informed Walt that he was taking Powers up on his offer. Before he left, Iwerks sold his 20% share in the company back to Disney for less than \$3,000, a grievous financial mistake he would forever regret. With Iwerks went Carl Stalling and a saucy little frog that had been languishing for nearly three years while Mickey Mouse ruled the cartoon world.

Stalling, who was later to reach his greatest fame at Warner Brothers, was the first extraordinary talent hired by Iwerks while still in his salad days; many others would soon labor on Flip. From New York came future legends Grim Natwick and Shamus Culhane, hired from Fleischer along with Bernie Wolf. Irvn Spence (later a mainstay of Hanna Barbera's Tom and Jerry series at MGM) also played for Iwerk's team before helping MGM win seven Academy Awards. Steve Bosustow, who would play a major role in the UPA revolution and later became that studio's president, learned his trade at Iwerks'. So did a young cel-washer who would eventually cut his animating teeth on Flip as Grim Natwick's assistant animator - Chuck Jones. Rudy Zamora would eventually work for nearly every major animation studio in the business. Post Flip notables included Al Eugster and Arthur Turkisher (who replaced Stalling as music director), and the mercurial Frank Tashlin was also on hand for a brief stay.

Most were lured from other studios by the belief that Iwerks was the "Man Behind Disney," the true creative genius of the two. Pat Powers did much to promote this idea. Hoping to ride to fame and fortune





Courtesy Greg Ford/Kino on Video

with Iwerks, many of these remarkable talents were quick to leave when they discovered that Disney was his own best man and that the path to success lay elsewhere. In 1930, however, Ub was a young and eager 28 year-old, the larder was full and the stage was set for the debut of Tony the Frog. Yes, Flip's original name was Tony; reasons for the name change are obscure but it appears that Iwerks reconsidered the name prior to production. At the time, and for some time afterwards, alliterative names (such as Mickey Mouse) were highly popular among animated characters. Ethnic names were nonexistent. Iwerks and Powers probably wanted to follow every formula for success and so Iwerks renamed his creation "Flip."

### Growing Pains

Iwerks was responsible for the original design of Flip and when the new "star" made his debut in the 1930 release *Fiddlesticks* audiences saw a small frog complete with webbed hands and feet. In this film Flip is the headliner in a musical talent show put on by woodland animals. After hopping across several lily pads, Flip entertains the animals with a jaunty dance. A mouse with a fiddle joins Flip, now at a piano, and the two play an impromptu concert. Flip wears a bow tie and a row of buttons down his belly and is, in truth, none too impressive a character. The gags involving his ramshackle piano are charmless and Flip's reactions reveal little personality. The short rather resembles a late-

era Walt Disney Alice comedy without Alice present. The animation in some places is unforgivably sloppy for a draftsman of Iwerk's stature; in the overlong sequence where Flip enters the cartoon the background can be seen to slant upwards. The novelty of using the (two-color) Cinecolor process was of little help in getting the series off to a notable start.

The next two entries, *Puddle Pranks* and *Flying Fists*, also failed to establish the character. The only inspired moment in either cartoon is a cute sequence in the latter film when Flip's boxing match with Kid Turtle turns into a fey ballet number for a few moments. The public did not take the amphibian's antics to heart and neither did Pat Powers, who was hoping to sell the





series to a major distributor. One problem was Flip's unappealing design. Iwerks had faced a similar problem while at Disney; his original depiction of Oswald the Lucky Rabbit did not meet with the approval of Universal Studios and the character was redesigned after only one cartoon. Since Oswald's makeover led to success this was naturally Iwerk's first move in order to invigorate Flip.

With Flip's fourth cartoon, *The Village Barber*, it was clear that a new frog had emerged. Flip is roughly four feet tall and sports gloves, bulky shoes, and a pair of shorts. His eyes are larger and far more expressive, an impression reinforced by a face which is now distinguishable from his torso. Flip's mouth is still rather froglike, which skews the design; at times in profile he appears to sport a beak and resembles a poorly caricatured pelican. This is a transitional Flip still on his way to final design. Shamus Culhane still considered this version to be "singularly ugly" and would continue to refine him until a third and final version emerged in early 1932. Flip's makeover solved one problem and the cartoons of that inaugural year were good enough to allow Pat Powers to strike a distribution deal with MGM (their first cartoon venture). Still, these cartoons were not good enough to make anyone forget Disney.

Many times the cartoons suggested watered-down Disney with their rural settings, jokes involving barnyard animals, "rubber hose" animation, and anthropomorphic casts of nondescript critters. To the very end of the series "surprise lines" and question marks floated up from character's heads. When Flip did speak his falsetto recalled Mickey's. Despite Power's wish to promote his Cinephone system

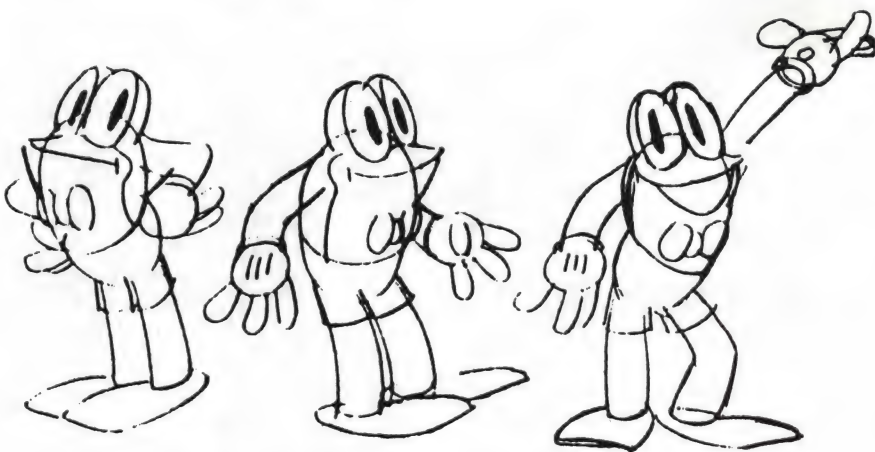
through Iwerk's cartoons, Flip's adventures were essentially silent films with peppy soundtracks and sound effects which were already cliché. Repetitious gags and weak plots frequently plagued these cartoons. The year's final entry, *The Cuckoo Murder Case*, repeats no less than seven different gags twice and when the cartoon appears to be milked dry Flip simply dives out the window and the film ends. Despite these drawbacks Flip himself slowly began to develop a likable personality, a pleasing appearance, and depth as a character.

### Shooting for Stardom

1931 saw ten cartoons released to the theaters and the growing experience of the studio hands were becoming more evident. If Flip's cartoons continued to underutilize dialogue, at least Stalling's scores were jazzier. Under the influence of the Fleischer recruits some of the locales included city and urban settings (creative tensions between the New Yorkers on the staff and the more bucolic Californians were never truly resolved; throughout the series barnyard animals would inexplicably show up on city streets). Romance bloomed with Flip's first lady love, a black kitty who resembled a distaff Felix. She first appeared in *Soup*

the photograph eventually peeks between its fingers with a wide smile, enjoying the view. This was only the first glimpse of Flip's libido; there would be plenty more.

The Hays Office did not establish the Production Code Administration until 1934, well after Flip had come and gone; censorship of these cartoons was nonexistent. As a result Flip's cartoons are rife with bathroom and outhouse jokes, sexism, goosings, animate (and inanimate) objects cursing "damn!" and "hell!" and enough scatology to delight any fan of Ren and Stimpy. Lice and fleas crawl out of people's clothing, feet stink badly enough to nauseate Flip's dog, and black gobs of expectorate are used as weapons, to state a few examples. Ethnic and gay stereotypes abound, from the evil Chow Mein in *A Chinaman's Chance* to the outrageously effeminate customer in *Soda Squirt*. Blacks, Jews, American Indians and even Scots took their shameful turns in Flip's politically incorrect world. The most hilarious jokes were centered around sex and more than a few cartoons would have had problems getting by censors today. Flip might, for example, crawl under a girl's dress (as he did in 1932's *School Days*) and emerge with her panties draped over his head. By



Transitional Flip the Frog model sheet from the collection of Mike Glad

*Song*, which bore a resemblance to the earlier Fleischer short *Dizzy Dishes*.

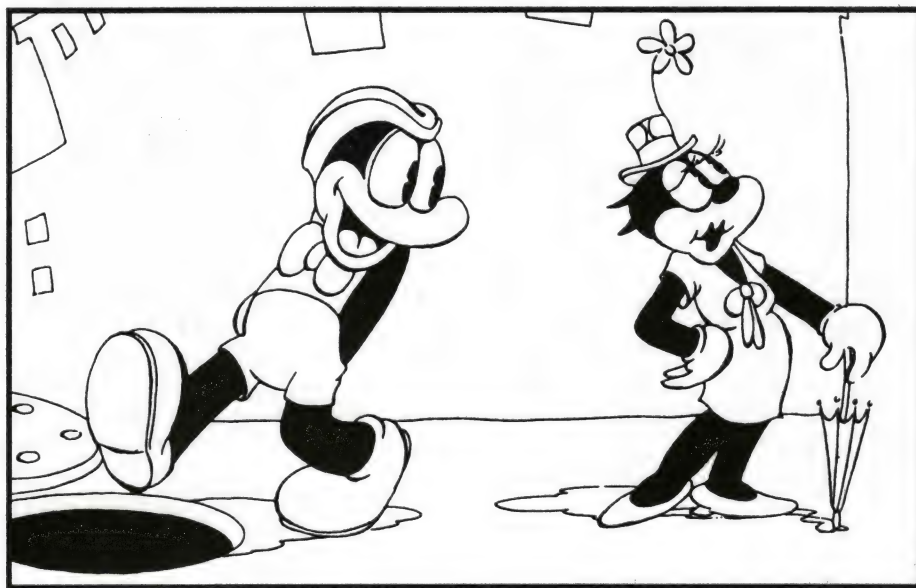
Several cartoons included musical revues (a standard feature of 1930s animated shorts). One of these, *Ragtime Romeo*, is an excellent cartoon. Flip arrives at Kitty's house, dumps an orchestra's worth of instruments out of his car, and entertains not only his love but a whole houseful of animals with his musical talents until a sleepy cow calls the police. In an early scene Kitty has a framed picture of Flip sitting on her bureau which comes to life as she undresses offscreen. Modest at first,

1932 most Flip cartoons would find room for more than one risqué giggle and these were among the best shorts the series had to offer.

1932 was Flip's most prolific year, with fifteen cartoons in release. The first one, *The Milkman*, featured Flip's third and final design. Flip's eyes no longer protrude at all above the top of his skull and his muzzle has been rounded; he no longer resembles a frog at all. If not for the series title it would be difficult to determine exactly what sort of creature Flip might be but this version is the most expressive and



best-looking by far. Flip's personality had also evolved. He was now an engaging pantomime clown in the tradition of Chaplin (Flip briefly imitates him in 1931's *Movie Mad*). Flip is rarely in control of any situation for long and much of the series' humor derives from his reactions to his misfortunes. Flip inherited some of Iwerks' personality as well; in entries such as *The Village Specialist* (1931) and *Techno-Cracked* (1933) Ub's love of technical and mechanical challenges shines clearly through.



Other improvements that year included the elimination of anthropomorphic supporting characters; the secondary players are all human, a transition that other studios had difficulty making. A stock cast also appeared including, for want of better names, the Kid (a young tyke who sometimes shared Flip's misadventures), the Cop (a mustachioed, overweight officer of the law), and the Spinster (a goggle-eyed, skinny woman with her hair piled up in a double bun). Gone was Kitty; commanding Flip's attention was a bevy of gorgeous, shapely women who strongly resembled Betty Boop. This was because four ex-Fleischer staffers formerly worked on Betty, and Grim Natwick's influence is especially evident. Shamus Culhane recalled that on one occasion Iwerks, in a Puritanical mood, redrew one of these faux "Bettys" in order to tone down her sex appeal!

Several Flip cartoons from this year are gems. *Room Runners* features Flip trying to escape from a hotel (run by the Spinster) without paying his bill. His attempts to slip out the window via a knotted sheet landed him squarely on top of the Cop and the

chase through the hotel was on. This ribald cartoon features a sexy Betty Boop knockoff who can't seem to finish bathing or towel-drying off without Flip ending up in her shower or spying on her through keyholes (along with the Cop!). The Spinster joins the fray and winds up smashing her head through a picture frame, giving her the body of the nude in the painting (nipples are clearly visible). The Cop collides with a woman from behind while pursuing Flip; her generous buttocks are pushed up into her chest, much to her delight! There is also a running

gag involving a bloke with a toothache who seems to prefer the most painful solutions possible. The action never lags in this delightful farce and the addition of a realistically drawn female lends the short more sophistication than usual.

*Funny Face* is another exceptional outing. Flip's girlfriend (a preteen version of Betty Boop) has rejected him for another suitor. Flip looks into a mirror, sees himself as a cross-eyed ape, and so subjects himself to the ministrations of plastic surgeon Dr. Skinnum. In the doctor's office hang a cast of silly faces who attempt to sell themselves to Flip in a merry Gilbert and Sullivan-type number. Flip tells them they all "look like a horse's neck" ("a horse's what?" they reply). Flip is beckoned by a more attractive face hanging on the opposite wall and he chooses it to be grafted on over his own. Meanwhile, Flip's girlfriend is accosted by a bully who easily trounces Flip's rival and then turns his unwelcome attentions on the girl. In a clever sequence that recalls Flip's metamorphosis, the bully has his face momentarily torn off after Flip's girlfriend shoves a sheet of flypaper over it in self-defense. Flip (now tailed by

an adoring entourage of young girls) confronts the bully who has abducted his girlfriend. Flip fights valiantly only to have his new face punched off in the fracas. He finally wins the battle and the love of his girl, who gratefully accepts Flip as he is.

A shamefully sexist but rollicking romp was *The Office Boy*. After Flip uses a fire hose to remove a line of applicants he is hired to do odd jobs in an office. A constant distraction is the attractive secretary, who somehow becomes entangled in every task Flip tries to accomplish. Before the havoc is over, the poor secretary has a cat and mouse flee up her skirt, most of her clothes are torn away, and her derriere is slapped by the boss (who was aiming the blow at Flip). Needless to say, by the end of the short our hero is soon seeking employment once again.

### Into the Sunset

The curtain came down after only seven releases in 1933. In an effort to spice up the series Flip was placed in more exotic locales. *Coo Coo the Magician* sent him and his girl to a land that appears to be a pastiche of India and Egypt, and *Pale-Face* featured an Indian attack on the pioneer frontier. In *A Chinaman's Chance*, Officer Flip pursues his quarry into Chinatown where among other things he gets high in a wavy sequence of slow-motion acrobatics after puffing a pipeful of opium! *Soda Squirr* takes place in Hollywood where Flip opens a new drug store. Among his customers are Mae West and the Marx Brothers. Perhaps the best entry that year featured Flip in his own backyard.

*Techno-Cracked* (released May 8, in Cinecolor) begins with Flip swinging in a dog-powered hammock until the Spinster demands he mow the grass. Flip decides that a robot slave is in order and retires to the basement to cobble one together, fill it with junk, and attach a pumpkin to its body in lieu of a head. Naturally, Flip is able to bring it to life; this is a charming sequence that is pure child's fantasy. Flip exhorts the robot to work but it merely imitates his gestures. Once the creation finally begins to mow it goes on a rampage, destroying everything in sight. Desperate to stop his Frankenstein, Flip foolishly takes an axe to it; a bad move indeed since the robot is now furious. There is an excellent extreme low-angle shot where the monster advances on its terrified creator. The mad robot winds up ingesting dynamite which blows it to pieces. We next see a disgruntled Flip mowing the lawn well into the night. The moon turns into the robot's laughing face which mocks the angry frog below.

Five months later, the series ended.



### Post-Mortem

Why is Flip no longer with us today? There are several reasons. Much of the blame has historically been laid at Iwerks's feet; many of his past employees recalled Ub as a weak storyman with an underdeveloped sense of humor. Culhane described Iwerks as "colorless" and lacking in "showmanship." Chuck Jones characterized Iwerks as having "no sense of humor"

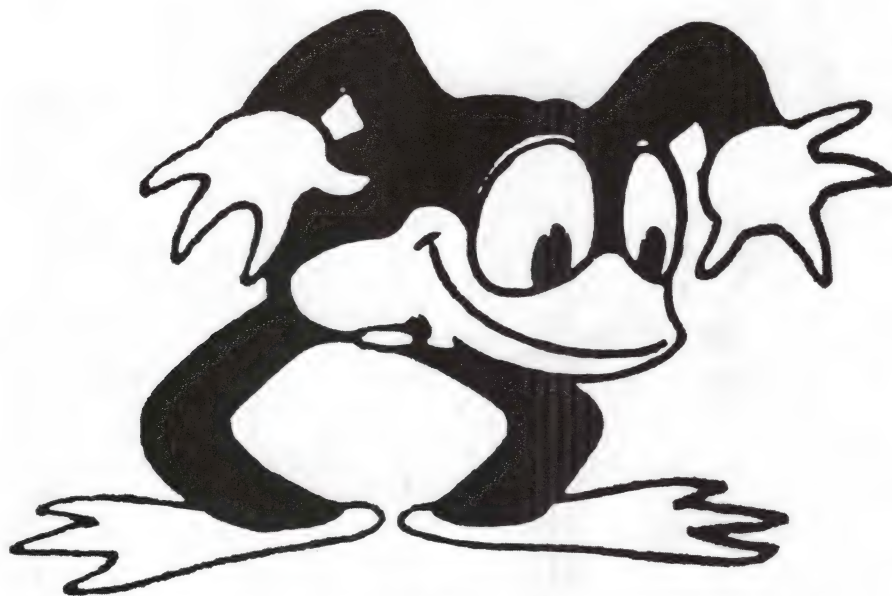
ences at the time. The Flip cartoons (especially after the arrival of all the Fleischer veterans) were superb in comparison.

Cost was certainly a factor in Flip's demise. Due to the addition of color and sound, the costs of producing cartoons doubled between 1928 and 1935. This increase occurred during the Depression years when money was tight. At least once in 1933 Iwerks considered closing the studio

potential was disregarded and an important source of revenue and promotion was lost. It is nearly impossible to find Flip the Frog memorabilia today.

There is at least one other important reason for Flip's failure to thrive, and that is the series' bleak view of the Depression. 1930-1933 were difficult years for the nation, and Flip did not deal in escapism. Themes related to the worst aspects of the Depression appeared frequently, including the most unsettling of all. In a 1974 article appearing in *Jump Cut*, Charles Eckert noted that: "The most persistent specter that the Depression offered to those who had come through the crash with some or most of their fortunes intact was...a small child dressed in welfare clothing...pausing to stare through the windows of cafeterias and grocery stores - his legs noticeably thin and his stomach slightly swollen..."

This exact image, in fact, occurs in *What A Life* (1932). Flip and the Kid are tantalized and mocked by a pancake that momentarily comes to life in a cafeteria window. They are penniless on that cold and snowy day and must resort to pawning the musical instruments they were using in an effort to panhandle. Other entries from that year have similar themes. In *The Milkman*, the Kid is a starving waif living in a trash



Early version of Flip the Frog (nee "Tony") as he appeared in *Fiddlesticks*

despite his impressive technical skills. Iwerks may have compounded these flaws by keeping a tight rein over story details and, restricting the creativity of his animators. Iwerks was merely parroting the lessons he had absorbed by working for Disney where centralized control of cartoon shorts by Walt was the rule. The only other writer on the staff was Jim "Bugs" Hardaway who was rather pedestrian in his approach to story; his strengths were more evident as a gagman.

Iwerks and Hardaway may have made a mediocre team but in their defense, apart from Disney and Fleischer (who were just hitting stride), animated cartoons of the early 1930s were largely an undistinguished lot. Farmer Al Falfa was the mainstay at Terrytoons. Columbia was producing the lamentable Krazy Kat and Scrappy series while Van Buren presented Aesop's Fables and Tom and Jerry. Walter Lantz was still doing Oswald and Pooch the Pup. All of these series featured the same meandering plots, nondescript characters, and "rubber hose" animation decried by modern critics who assail Flip. These series also were, for the most part, poorly received by audi-

for the duration of a bank holiday announced by President Roosevelt. Flip was caught between the trap of mediocre or poor reviews and the increasing costs of upgrading cartoons. Iwerks lost faith in the frog and decided to reserve those costs for his Comicolor series; had the extra money and technical resources been lavished on Flip the series may have enjoyed greater popularity. Rarely playing the role of businessman, Iwerks also did virtually nothing to market or promote Flip. His merchandising



"I haven't got a hat!"



can, eager to pilfer Flip's milk. In many of his "city" cartoons, Flip is either broke, looking for work, or doing odd jobs to survive (*The Office Boy*, *The Nurse Maid*). The Bully sees Flip forced into a prizefight at the behest of the Kid in order to win the purse.

Other studios responded to the Depression with optimistic shorts such as Walter Lantz's 1933 cartoon *Confidence*. In this film, Oswald uses the powerful medicine "Confidence" (bestowed upon him by a grinning President Roosevelt) to defeat a grim bogeyman meant to signify the Depression. Disney's *Three Little Pigs* (1933) was perhaps the ultimate example of animated allegories about the Depression (as personified by the Big Bad Wolf). The spunky pigs eventually band together and emerge triumphant. Flip, created at the height of the crisis, offered no such balm. If anything, his cartoons highlighted the hardships of those difficult years and perhaps alienated audiences who might have rallied around him otherwise.

In light of these circumstances, it is perhaps time that Flip the Frog receives better standing in animation history. Seen in context, it stands as one of the more notable animated series of the early 1930s. The fact that the cartoon failed commercially in no way diminishes the talent involved in its production or its entertainment value when seen today. All thirty-eight episodes are currently available through Bosko Video, and the discriminating animation fan may judge whether history has been unduly unkind to Ub Iwerks and his much-maligned creation.



Two scenes from *The Office Boy* (1932)

### Flip the Frog Filmography

#### 1931

- Fiddlesticks
- Flying Fists
- Puddle Pranks
- The Village Barber
- The Cuckoo Murder Case
- Laughing Gas
- Ragtime Romeo
- The Village Smitty
- The Soup Song
- Movie Mad
- The New Car
- Little Orphan Willie

#### 1932

- Jail Birds
- Africa Squeaks
- The Village Specialist
- Stormy Seas
- What A Life
- The Milkman
- Spooks
- Fire! Fire!
- Puppy Love
- School Days
- The Bully
- The Office Boy
- Room Runners
- Circus

#### 1932

- The Goal Rush
- The Phoney Express
- The Music Lesson
- The Nurse Maid

#### 1933

- Funny Face
- Coo-Coo, The Magician
- Flip's Lunchroom
- Technocracked
- Bulloney
- A Chinaman's Chance
- PaleFace
- Soda Squirt



# Reading Walt's Mind: Jacques Rupp Reflects on a Life in Animation

Interview by Gord Wilson

**Gord Wilson:** What got you interested in animation?

**Jacques Rupp:** I'd always had a long, deep, abiding interest in drawing and painting. So I'd just gotten out of the Navy and here was the G.I. Bill. Meanwhile, Art Center had a traveling show to recruit students, and had reserved a suite at what is now the Olympic Hotel in Seattle. They

called a BPA—Bachelor of Professional Arts. What Art Center did for you besides educate and train you, is you spent your final year preparing a portfolio, so I came out of there with a killer portfolio—it looked like a million bucks-- and I took that to Disney.

**GW:** In the 1958 presentation copy of his book, *Walt Disney: The Art of Animation* that he autographed to you, Bob Thomas wrote "To Jacques Rupp, who knows all

it, and I was on my merry way, and it was good.

It was an exciting time, a monumental time in the history of the studio, because all these new things were happening: Walt was starting the Park in Anaheim, he started his weekly television show on ABC, and to support that, he had the commercials unit, where we did things like Peter Pan peanut butter, and Bucky Beaver for Ipana. I was doing those left and right, and doing inserts for the television show. I did a slew of Jiminy Cricket educational things. That's the thing about animation—it has a life forever. If they can keep the negatives from destroying themselves, goodnight—they can run them over and over.

**GW:** In the "Compilation of Animation Credits" section of his book--which is limited to feature length pictures--Bob Thomas lists you as "layout" for *Lady and the Tramp*. He devotes a chapter to layout that makes the layout man sound like a jack of all trades. What does a layout man do?

**JR:** The so-called layout man picks up the production flow at the end of the storyboard. You've seen storyboards—little sheets of paper pushpinned on the wall with dialogue underneath and an indication of what transpires in that particular scene. The layout man amplifies that up to actual final drawing size and refines it. He isolates the background elements—say it's a farm building—he does that as a drawing—and a very nice drawing, and this is all on paper, we're not talking cels yet. He takes that and does key poses. So now you have a set of paper drawings with a character doing something. Then the background department gets the background going. Maybe it's a few feet wide, and the shot is a pan. The background moves and the camera doesn't, but panning along it gives the illusion that the camera is moving.

There's a battery of guys who are background painters, and they're excellent painters in the fine arts genre. We had some wonderful background painters. A friend of mine, Eyvind Earle, was the background chief for *Sleeping Beauty*. I have a painting by him hanging above my stairway. They



Jacques Rupp

posted student work, and it was so outstanding that a painter friend and I talked it over and decided "let's go." I had a job at the time as an editor of a newspaper for Veterans of Foreign Wars. I'd sneak a cartoon in now and then. I was an easy sell for myself, since I was the editor).

The G.I. Bill paid all the tuition and materials for the Art Center, but with only \$75 a month left over to live on. They hadn't established a Masters program yet, so after three years, I emerged with something

about the contents of this volume." When did you start at Disney?

**JR:** 1953. I started out in an inbetweeners' program, but after four or five months, I got moved upstairs. That was the beginning of the good stuff. Each of us—I think there were twelve in the class—did a pencil test. We all did something with Donald Duck. I did a real silly Donald Duck thing where he did a big take when a female Duck walks by, like Tex Avery or ala *Mask*. It lasted about a minute. So that was



don't deal with the characters at all. There's supposed to be a marriage between the figures and backgrounds, they're designed to work together. They can't be totally incongruous, but in some cartoons, often are. You get a very cartoony, far-out character, with a background that's semi-realistic, and you have a dichotomy. Not only Disney, of course, but also UPA was very sensitive to that: their characters worked with their backgrounds. It's supposed to be a unified thing by the time you're through.



**GW:** What did you do in *Lady and the Tramp*?

**JR:** *Lady and the Tramp* was kind of an apprenticeship thing for me. It was well into layout and design when I got there. I was an assistant. The first part I worked on was the dog pound sequence, also the zoo and spaghetti sequences. Bucky Beaver was derived from a beaver sequence in *Lady and the Tramp*. He was in a zoo and lisped; he had a very sibillant kind of delivery. I drew rocks and things for a monkey enclosure pen, and studied the sycamore tree very closely, because the gag with the beaver was his sibillance, so they gave him as many words as they could starting with the letter "s," so here was a silly sycamore tree. That was his *modus operandi*, so I had to study what the heck a sycamore tree looked like, what the bark texture was, what the leaf configuration was. All that was part of layout.

**GW:** What did you do on the *Disneyland* television show?

**JR:** The *Disneyland* television show went

on in 1954, just as the Park was being constructed. I storyboarded and designed the titles for the TV show. I used the castle, which has been carried through 'till today, in a much more polished form, and Tinkerbell flying in and going "plink" with her wand. It's been upgraded and sophisticated and polished a lot more than the version I storyboarded, but that was the seed. Walt bought that. He wanted a shuttle to run from L.A. to Anaheim, so I designed the Snow White bus. It wasn't my taste, but I knew Walt would like it. That's what it was all about--reading Walt's mind..

I was at Disney for six years. After *Lady and the Tramp* I went to the commercials unit. I also did design things for the Park, and a lot of collateral things with other people--like the logos, popcorn boxes and drink cups--and helped select costumes for Frontierland. Everything was designed. I also worked on Walt Disney's Magazine, doing layout and illustration. That was Walt's way of working--taking a little bit here and a little bit there and putting it all together.

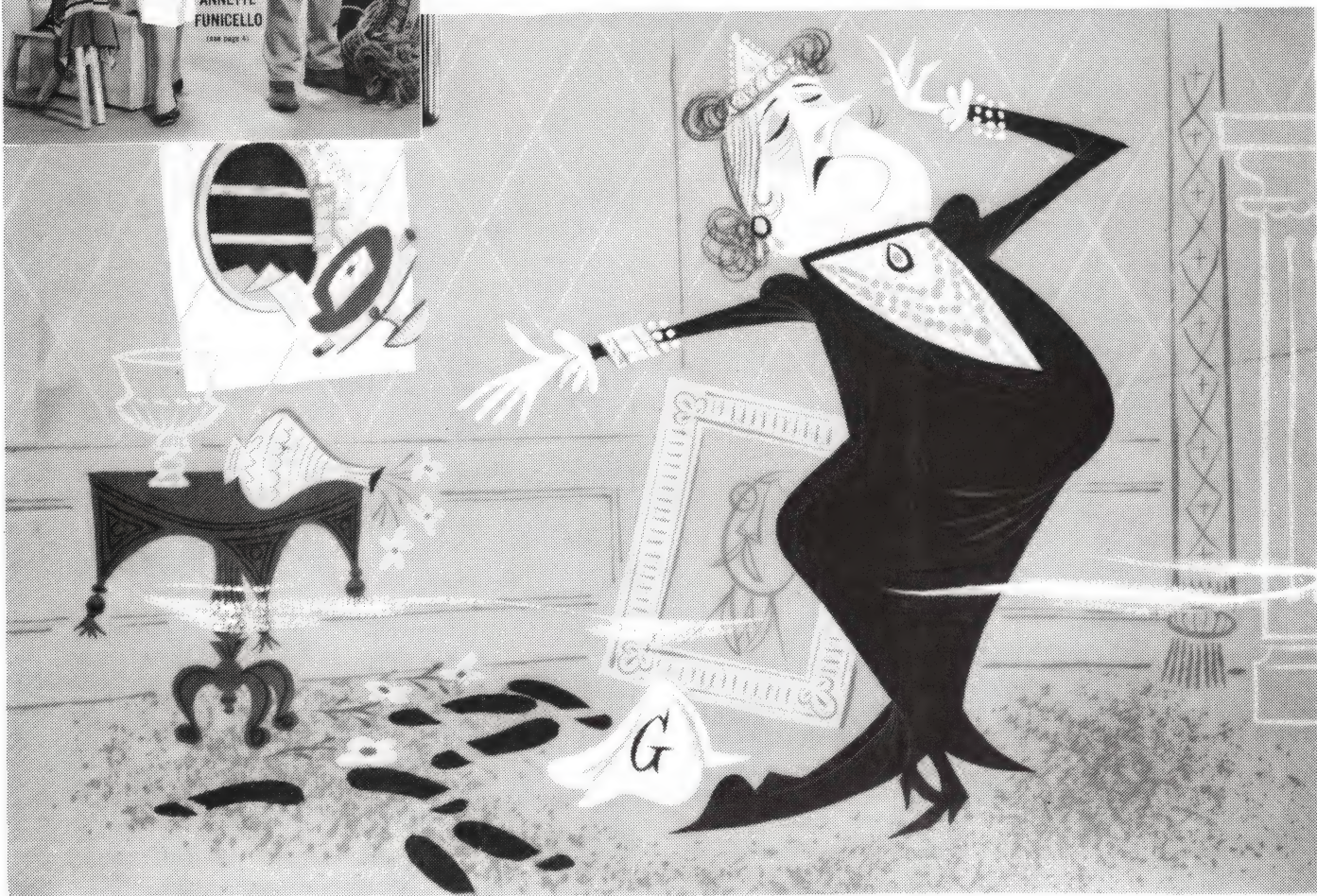


Illustration by Jacques Rupp from a 1958 Disney magazine





Jacques Rupp (right) working on the Snow White shuttle bus

**GW:** He'd walk around and look at people's stuff and say, "I like this" or "I like that"?

**JR:** We'd have story conferences. I was doing stories for Walt, without any great degree of success, I think, but I was working on a team with a guy named Dick Huemer--which is a neat name for an animation story man to have. Dick had worked with Walt for years. One project we worked on that never transpired was "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," and what could we make that grow into? Here I was doing little drawings and push pinning them on the wall, and Huemer would just tear sheets out of magazines that dealt with the subject. The rooms were a mass of storyboards--big cork boards wall to wall, and that's the way he worked--and he knew how to work with Walt.

We always had storyboards going in the

aisles on the walls of the studio. As you know, the animation studio in Burbank on Buena Vista was originally designed as a hospital. It was built during the war, and the only way Walt could get building materials and contracts was to build it as a hospital. So it was designed with a central hallway, with a whole bunch of lateral wards. Each ward became headquarters for an animation team where a sequence would be done. They'd have their own director, assistant director, a couple layout men and a couple background painters. The miraculous thing is how beautifully and seamlessly they could bring all that stuff together. Like Lady and the Tramp--you can't tell one director's work from another, or one animator's work from another's.

**GW:** Is that kind of an ironical twist on laughter as the best medicine? Maybe the cartoons did contribute to the health of America after all--people sure felt bucked

about paying taxes after seeing *The Spirit of '43* and *The New Spirit*,--not to mention how generous Disney was with its characters for wartime projects as detailed in the book *Disney Dons Dogtags*. You also had a cameo appearance in an episode of the Disneyland TV show that aired March 9, 1955, called *Man in Space*.

**JR:** It was produced at the Burbank studios on Buena Vista, and was made up of a whole bunch of little segments in all different styles. There's a comedy sequence about what gravity is and Newton's laws are, and that's done in a particular cartoon style--every action has an equal and opposite reaction--all that sort of thing. Another segment was what is all this hardware going to look like when we finally get to the moon? An abridged version was later released as a theatrical featurette. Everything Disney did was kind of interlocked--he got a lot of mileage out of everything he did.



**GW:** What did you do on *Man in Space*?

**JR:** I was assigned to the Ward Kimball unit—he's a legendary person in himself. Not only was he a fabulous animator—he did real funny, broad, slapsticky animation. He also was a great musician and he had his own band, called the Firehouse Five Plus Two, and they played Dixieland. He was a man of just unlimited energy. He'd work all day at the studio and then pack up and go play. The band was made up of people who were musicians as well as Disney artists. Ward Kimball had this unit and I think I got run into it because of the Art Center background and the fact that I had a college degree. The show was supposed to have—and did have—a scientific bent.

So they imported three German scientists: Willie Ley, who was a German science fiction writer, Wernher Von Braun, and Heinz Haber. Soon as the war was over, these guys really came on board quickly with the Americans. They also did books for Disney. Willie Ley did *Our Friend the Atom*. I helped design the book and have a few illustrations in it. The studio enabled me to be a multipurpose person—it saved my tail many times and kept me working.

Wernher was at an Army post back east developing a rocket with sufficient reliability for the space program, and he'd fly over to the studio about every month to act as a consultant. Werner was an idea man. In the film, we contributed voices, designed sets, supervised model building. They had a wonderful modeling department that built some beautiful sets. I worked on the animated part where the rocket comes out from the gantry to launch. It was difficult to get the sense of how enormous the rocket would be—this was fourteen years before Neil Armstrong landed on the moon in 1969--and then to make the enormous fire and smoke that would come billowing out when it touched off.

**GW:** You have a cameo in there with Wernher Von Braun.

**JR:** It was fun for us to go out on the set. We got to be away from the drawing board, and had a chance to be actors. So we were all art-type people, and we made the tables look like big drafting tables, with paper plans figuratively spread out on them, and we were pretending to be engineers, as if we were from Jet Propulsion Laboratories. We're discussing details about the rocket and the launch. It was all done with voice-

overs. We even did sound effects. Disney had a wonderful sound effects man, and we went over and played with all kinds of things in one of the sound stages. We got a neat eerie sound by dragging a pipe over the concrete floor that you hear as the rocket readies for lift off. I voiced the count down, and did a few other voices. That was the wonderful thing; you got to be involved in so many different things. In retrospect, it's easy to miss the point that this was all before the fact. Now we have space things galore, but this was before any of that stuff was ever designed or built. Even though the show was made before we landed on the moon, you still see it around some-times.



© UPA Productions  
UPA version of the Dr. Seuss character  
Gerald McBoing Boing

**GW:** Did you work on any shorts?

**JR:** I worked on a few Donald Duck shorts, but the shorts program was discontinued. At one time the sales to the theaters was a package deal: a feature, a newsreel and a cartoon. That went out, so unless it's an animation festival, you seldom see a cartoon. Without the theatrical market, it was too bloody expensive to make the shorts, so they stopped making them. I did

some designs for *Donald Duck in Mathmagic Land*, but they weren't used in the final film.

**GW:** That's considered the most successful educational film of all time—and some of it does have your stylized UPA look. I think some of your designs got in there anyway. Now with the release of *Fun and Fancy Free* on video, maybe that will generate enough interest in the characters again—Mickey, Donald and Goofy—to rev the shorts program back up. Where did you go after Disney?

**JR:** That was my first tour of duty at UPA. They were doing the Mr. Magoo movie—*1001 Arabian Nights*. Other than designing titles, all I did was promotion stuff for that. It was already in full-blown production and I was lucky I got on. Here again, it was my advertising background. I helped the promotion manager and we did flyers, posters, and promotion pieces. I think that was U.P.A.'s first feature.

**GW:** Was Disney viewed as more prestigious than UPA?

**JR:** Actually, it was the other way around. Some avant-garde types at the Art Center mocked the Disney style as soft and round. UPA was hip and angular, stylized and minimalistic. That was the "in" style for commercials, too. I went back to doing advertising for a company called Animation Inc. Commercials were fun to lay out—they were even wilder and looser than a cartoon short. I did some for Midas Muffler, and for some gasoline companies.

Those were wild, interesting times—animated commercials were hot stuff then. Now what's big is stop-action, such as Will Vinton's Claymation studio in Portland, like the California Raisins or the new M&M commercials. Stop-action, one-frame-at-a-time animation dates back to Puppetteons by George Pal. When I was at Animation Incorporated, we had Jonathan Winters banging around the studio, while we were doing both animated commercials and titles. One, I remember, was a Bob Hope thing.

**GW:** Where did you go after that?

**JR:** Hanna-Barbera. I worked on The Flintstones and some collateral characters. On *The Flintstones* I laid out backgrounds and key poses. *The Jetsons*—I got in on the ground floor of that—at the development stage. What does their house look like?





**Yogi Bear in his pic-a-nic mode**  
© Hanna-Barbera

What does their kitchen look like? The buildings all kind of came out looking like the Space Needle later did at the 1962 Seattle World's Fair, but that was before they had built the Space Needle.

I would do drawings of them for model sheets: this is how the spaceships would look. Then the animators would work from the model sheets. Everybody was hooked on flying saucers, so we thought of the saucer shape as looking futuristic—so boom!--I'm going to make the house look like a saucer on a stick. It was half 'fifties and half the future--with a little bit of Buck Rogers thrown in there for good measure.

**GW:** So you were bouncing between advertising, animation and design?

**JR:** Yes. This was hop skip and jump time, because there was no work—it was like being between pictures, and everything except Pacific Title was based on television series. Like *The Famous Adventures of Mr. Magoo*—maybe that would be good for 12 or 18 months—and then the series would be finished and the staff would be laid off.

It's inherent in the motion picture industry. They do a picture, and then the picture's over, and you're over until your next picture. There wasn't much permanent staff in a studio. They'd try to work on another film after that, but they couldn't always butt them together or make them overlap, which would have been delightful. That was the nature of the business. I never ended up back at Disney, although I'd have liked to have gone back. Once out, always

out, seemed to be the Disney view. I tried a couple times but it was not to be. So I went back to advertising.

**GW:** What are some of your favorite commercials?

**JR:** Probably the commercials for the Wham-O Superball I storyboarded at Anderson, Morgan, DeSantis and Ball, or the logo spots for KOMO TV in Seattle.

**GW:** When did you go back to cartoons?

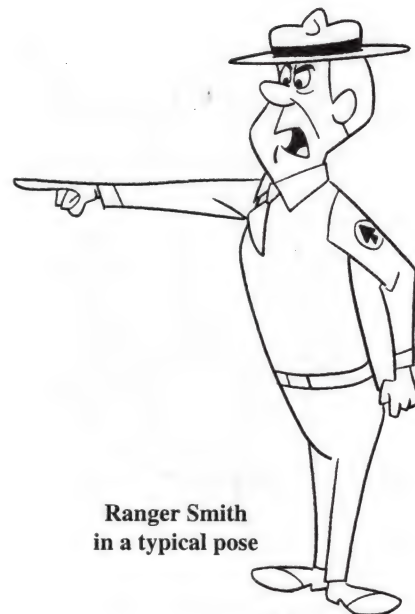
**JR:** I went back to Hanna-Barbera in 1963, for the Yogi Bear feature, *Hey There it's Yogi Bear*. That's the reason they were



© Hanna-Barbera

hiring. HB was trying to polish their image a little bit; they had a reputation for limited animation and wanted to do something a little classier, so they pumped a few more production values into the feature than for a standard series cartoon. In some of those, the limited animation was so limited that you had people walking in back of other people so you wouldn't have to animate their feet, and so on.

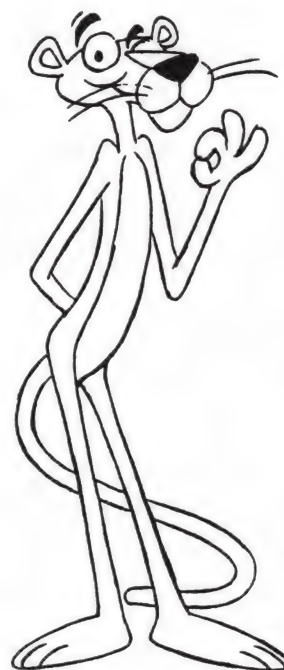
In the movie, Cindy Bear gets captured and taken to the circus by the unscrupulous ringmaster—that's the storyline. For the feature, it was Disney time again, where you had to break it up into units. I did some of the circus stuff. There were aerial shots where you're looking up at the inside of the tent, with the guy wires coming up supporting the tent, a lot of perspective work which never entered into the flatter look of—say--*The Flintstones*. It had songs and dancing and psychedelic scenes, and went way beyond anything they'd done up until that time. I probably also laid out the odd *Richochet Rabbit* or *Punkin Puss and Mush Mouse* short for *The Magilla Gorilla Show*. Some of them you could lay out in a week.



**Ranger Smith in a typical pose**

© Hanna-Barbera

I also worked at Pacific Title making animated titles for live-action features. There came a time when getting animation into the titles became very stylish. *The Pink Panther* cartoon, of course, was a spin-off from the opening titles of Blake Edward's



**The Pink Panther**  
© DePatie-Freleng/United Artists

original Pink Panther film. Even though the cartoon character was changed substantially from the original animated titles character, the Mirisch-DePatie-Freleng cartoons still opened with "tribute" titles of the original pink panther.





Mr. Magoo  
© UPA Productions

**GW:** When did you get out of animation?

**JR:** I got a chance to get my oar in the water at the University of Washington in 1969, and stayed there for three years doing graphics and storyboarding their medical TV shows. For the regional medical program and did two television shows a week along with a lot of graphic printed material—that's what fitted my skills: brochures and pamphlets, storyboarding the TV shows and visuals that verged, in a quick and dirty way, on medical illustration. "Here are your intestines"—that sort of thing.

Funding for the program was drying up, and the end was in sight, so I started freelancing at a newspaper, *The Seattle Times*, doing covers for their magazine section, and at age 50, went to work at art department of the *Times*. Technically and career-wise, 50 is the kiss of death, but it didn't hurt that I'd gone to the University of Washington and had worked on student publications there. I ended up designing the newspaper masthead—which they've recently redone--and doing illustration and layout there until I retired. The skills I had developed for animation—storyboarding, layout, drawing, painting and design--also proved transferable to these other projects.

Jacques Rupp lives in Seattle, Washington, where he works as an artist, occasionally taking time off from painting to address collectors of animation and Disneyana.



Meet George Jetson, Jane, his wife, daughter Judy and their boy, Elroy. © Hanna-Barbera

**GW:** When did you go back to UPA?

**JR:** The second stint at UPA was for *The Famous Adventures of Mr. Magoo*. I was back to my main strength as a layout man. That's what I did for Animation Inc.—I was a layout man laying out commercials--and also later at Filmation. The Magoo TV show had him cast in various roles as Friar Tuck, Long John Silver, Rip Van Winkle or Dr. Frankenstein, and I designed titles for that.

**GW:** Where else did you work?

**JR:** At DePatie-Freleng I did the odd Pink Panther but mostly worked on *Magneto Man*—he was my own character for the *Super Six*—kind of stupid stuff. There were six super heroes, so there were six layout men, and each was assigned a character to do. The one I fell heir to was *Magneto Man*.

If you were going to generate more than one short of say, Superman, at a time, you'd have more than one layout man. That was at Filmation—*The Superman-Aquaman Hour of Adventure*. Filmation's was also limited animation. That was my last animation effort. I worked at those places long after they'd shut down the Warner Bros. Animation studio in 1963 and also MGM's had closed down. At one point it was mainly only Disney, UPA and Hanna-Barbera. UPA basically gave up at the end of the Mr. Magoo series, and Saperstein mainly went into distribution. Now Disney has released a live-action Mr. Magoo feature--like they did with *George of the Jungle*.





## IndieFest, NYC's First Fest, Disney's First Flicker Found, Feline Folly, More Format First

### First Annual San Francisco IndieFest

More than three thousand Bay Area film lovers, critics, dilettantes, and dabblers turned out for the fresh new San Francisco Independent Film Festival on January 7-10, proving once again the consistent demand for independent film showcases.

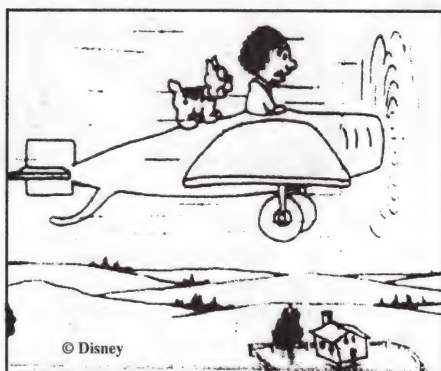
The festival opened with a packed house for Nick Davis's 1999, a dark comedy that celebrates the millennium by tackling even older questions with inventive twists and turns that mapped out a party not to be missed. With comedy legend Steven Wright adding his own unique voice to the hilarious dialogue of up and coming writer Tim Davis, the packed house was drawn into the party atmosphere and gripped in a state of giddiness as they ruminated together on the end of the millennium.

Four days and 16 films later, the festival closed with Randolph Kret's *Pariah*, an exploration of revenge and the neo-nazi skinhead movement, which provoked the most animated discussion between audience and filmmaker of the weekend.

In addition to powerful dramas like *Pariah*, the IndieFest program was filled with great comedies. Therefore it was appropriate that the Tower Audience Award, awarded to the one film chosen by the festival audience as the "best of the fest," was presented to Gary Ellenberg for his quirky Unibomber mockumentary *Ted*.

With the status of "filmmaker" evolving into a glamorous category of artistry, the latest crop attracted to the medium is more varied than ever before. The IndieFest in its first year has succeeded in culling from the top layer a textured program that offered varying tastes and styles. Festival organizers hope to translate this year's success into a long life for the event; one that will expand and mature with each passing year. Bay Area film aficionados will certainly want to keep an eye out for next year's program; a true celebration of the independent spirit.

--Jeff Ross



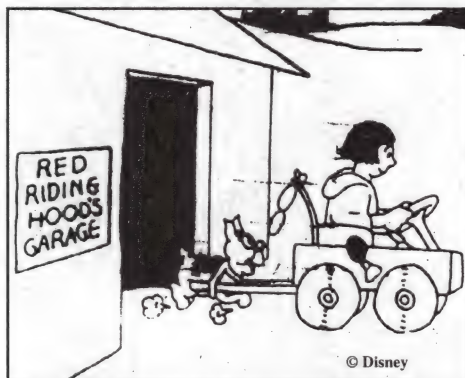
### First Disney Cartoon Flies Home

Thanks to an avid silent film collector in England, the Disney Archive now has a 35mm negative print of Walt Disney's first animated film *Little Red Riding Hood*.

David Wyatt purchased the long-lost film at a central London rental library liquidation sale for about \$3.00 in 1978.

Initially, Wyatt thought the film, labelled *Grandma Steps Out*, was just another silent cartoon typical of the early '20s. It wasn't until years later, while screening Disney's 1923 *Cinderella* for film scholar Russell Merritt, that Wyatt mentioned *Grandma Steps Out* and the film was correctly identified.

Scott MacQueen, who is head of restoration at Disney, provided David Wyatt with a 35mm print of *Little Red Riding Hood* in exchange for the use of Wyatt's 16mm print.



Frame from *Little Red Riding Hood*

Film scholars have been aware of the film's existence for many years. The story finally surfaced in the United States when the Disney Archive received a print.

Astonishingly, before the 16mm film was made into a preservation print, it was shown at a silent film festival in Italy in 1992.

David Wyatt says he would be willing to part with the film for "the right price."

--PCD



### Cat Only Responds To *Animaniacs*

A cat owner in Virginia Beach, Virginia sent the following story to columnist Dr. Fox: "Lizzie Bordon, my cat, comes running and purrs whenever I sing the theme song to the cartoon series *Animaniacs* - but she doesn't respond to any other song!"



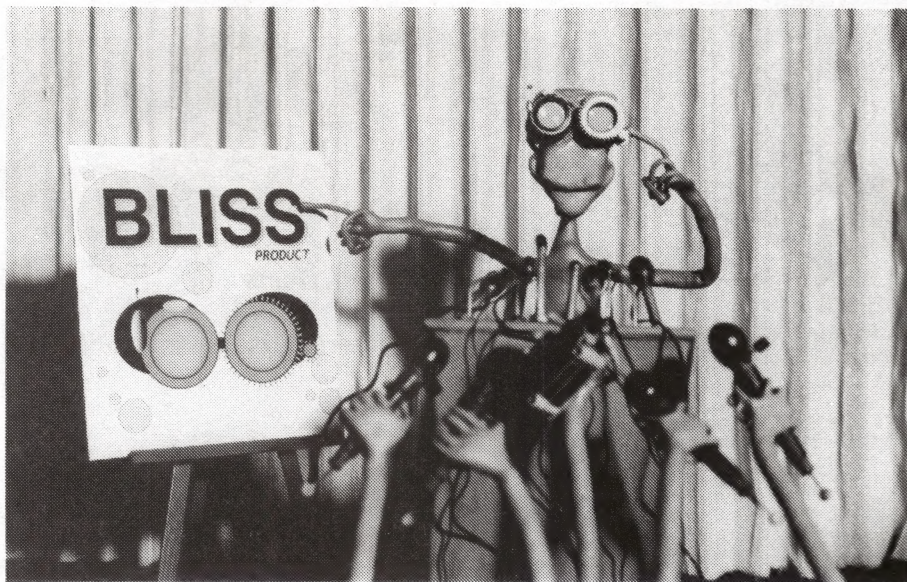
## Osborne Making *More* Out Of Stop-Motion

On November 19, 1998 Director Mark Osborne premiered his new animated short, *More* at the IMAX Theater in Los Angeles, where it was subsequently screened in front of the live-action film *Everest*, for a three day Academy qualification run. The six-minute experimental film is the first stop-motion animated work to be presented for exhibition in the 70/15p format, also known as "large-format" or "giant screen."

Osborne, an independent animator and Cal Arts instructor whose credits include several commercials and the clay-animated music video Weird Al's *Jurassic Park*, created *More* with the assistance of the Large Format Cinema Association's Animation Task Force, a non-profit organization which includes in its goals the objective of promoting and encouraging experimental uses of the medium. This year they have also assisted with several 70/15p animation projects by the likes of Jules Engel, Christine Panushka and Bärbel Newbauer.

"Large format is the perfect medium for experimentation in animation. The sheer size of the screen allows the artist the opportunity to create a viewing experience impossible in any other visual medium," says co-producer Debra Callabresi, who, on the flip side, produced the Internet Animation Festival, Absolut Panushka, which featured experimental animation displayed as Quicktime movies, about the size of a post-it note.

Osborne notes that one of the challenges of working with Large-Format Film is the level of detail it offers. "Since we had originally planned to shoot just in 35mm,



Mark Osborne: "It's so big, you can see fingerprints in the clay!"

our plans had to be expanded to include the additional level of detail and complexity needed for large format," he says. A crew of five artists labored for a total of three months on the elaborately detailed stop-motion world of *More*.

In addition, Osborne shot all stop-motion animation on "ones," meaning that he exposed just one frame of film for every movement of the scene. Some scenes using in-camera multiple-pass light effects required that a single frame needed to be shot four or even five times to achieve the desired effect. In all, *More* features over 7,000 individual frames of animation, including 30 seconds of hand-drawn cel animation, created by independent animator Lorelei Pepi, for a fantasy sequence in the film.

In addition to its premiere large format screening in November, *More* will be screened at the California Science Center as part of the LFCA Annual Conference and Large Format Film Festival on May 18-22, 1999 and the New York Animation Festival May 13-15. A 35 mm/4-perforation print will also be created for showing in more traditional venues. *More* will tour the festival circuit in 1999, and the puppet was featured in the "Suspended Animation" exhibit at California State University, Fullerton in February.

### First New York Animation Festival

A massive animation festival is coming to the Big Apple on May 13th with 150 animated films from 15 countries. In addition to the three days of screenings at the Tishman Auditorium, satellite screenings will be ongoing at the Rockefeller Center Digital Wall (free) and before the fest at Thundergulch (May 11) and the Knitting Factory Video Lounge (April 29).

Main program titles include: Digital, Experimental, International and U.S. Animation. Michael O'Rourke (Pratt Institute) is presenting a program of student animation at the Rockefeller Center on Wednesday May 5th.

Advance tickets available at **The New School Box Office** (66 West 12th Street) Tickets are \$7.00 per single screening or \$35.00 for a festival pass. You can charge by phone: 212-229-5488 or fax: 212-352-0213

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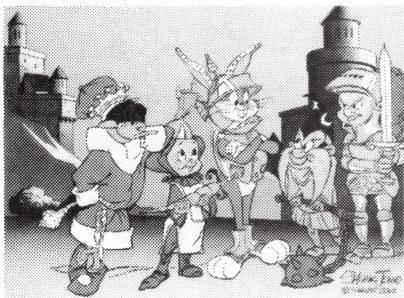
# PUBLISHER'S PICKS

"Fortunately, I have a publisher that is interested more in quality than in promptness" --Michael Barrier

The world of animated films and comic art

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In 1969 Michael Barrier started gathering material for a possible book with a trip to Los Angeles to interview Bob Clampett, Chuck Jones and Ward Kimball. Four years later, in 1973, he signed a contract with Oxford University Press to write a history of American cartoons fully expecting to deliver a manuscript in 1975 or 1976.

In issue 17 of *Funnyworld* magazine Barrier discussed his overdue book. Citing an overwhelming amount of material in the Library of Congress, the National Archives and a growing list of first-hand interviews, Mike now projected the publication date to 1979.

Barrier was soon following every lead to verify or debunk the stories and legends surrounding the golden age of animation.

Keep in mind, Michael Barrier still had to view the films discussed, publish *Funnyworld* and hold down a regular job. In addition, his face-to-face interview list had grown from 50 people to 120 and would soon eclipse 150. Little did he know it would take two more decades to realize his dream.

We are making *Hollywood Cartoons* our first Publisher's Pick because it's a monumental achievement deserving a spot on any animation fan's bookshelf.

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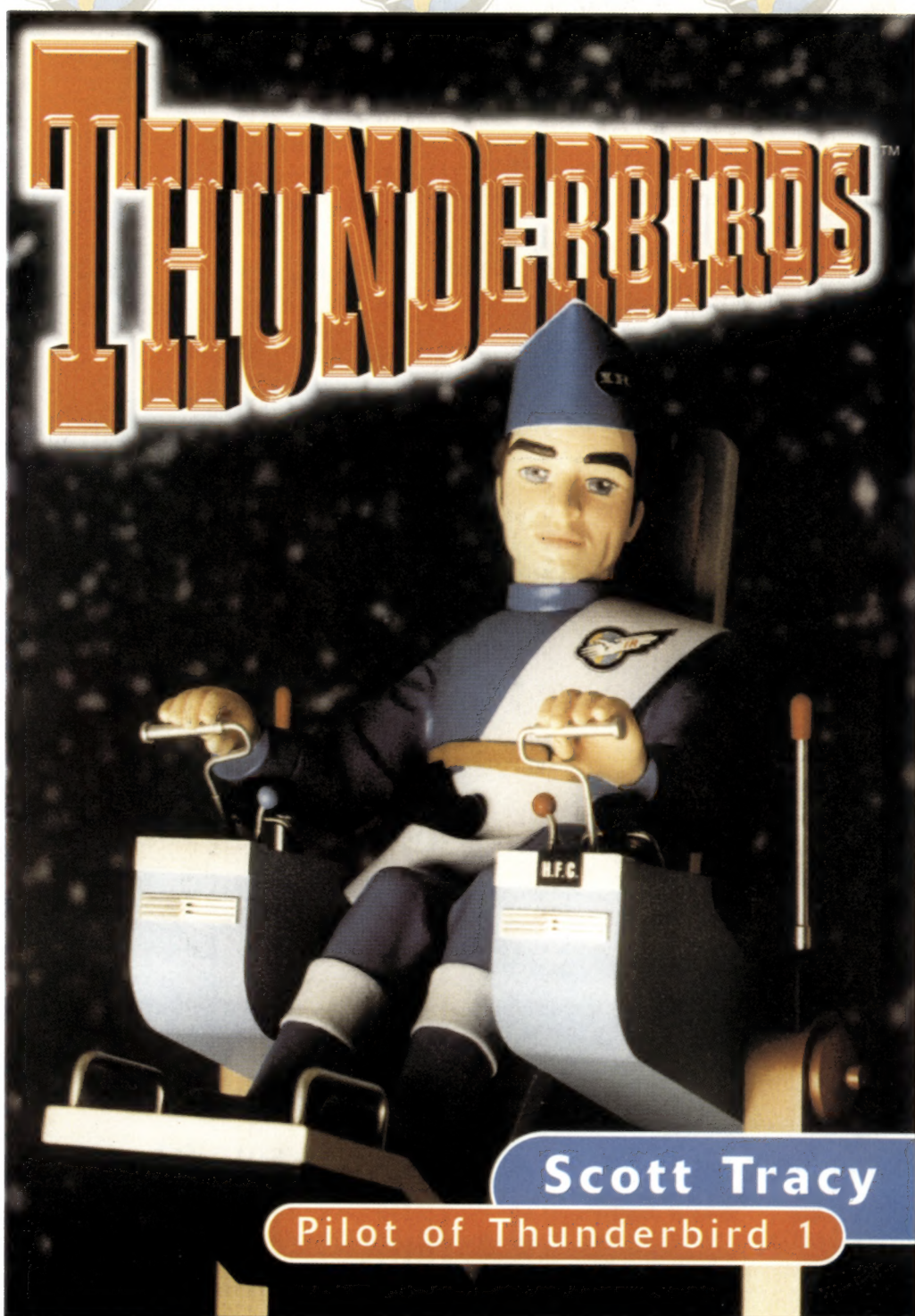
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